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1916

THE · GOSPEL
OF · OSIRIS
A · LAY · OF · THE
LADY · ISIS

BY · WM · NORMAN
GUTHRIE

BRENTANO'S
MANHATTAN
NEW · YORK

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FRANCES WRIGHT D'ARUSMONT

"FANNY WRIGHT"

who devoted service and fortune to the causes of liberty and progress,
a pioneer worker for the equal rights of women from 1818 till
the time of her death, and to whom this Lay of the
Lady Isis is dedicated with reverence

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

Being an Epic Cento
and Paraphrase
of Ancient Fragments

BY

William Norman Guthrie



BRENTANO'S
MANHATTAN, NEW YORK

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DEC 11 1916

NEW YORK
THE SHERWOOD PRESS

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no. 1.

FOREWORD

I

“OUT of Egypt have I called my son,” are words that haunt, and just because they refer to an ancient race tradition, seem as if they must bear some further meaning. Abraham and Isaac went down to Egypt, Joseph and Jacob; Moses was rescued from the waters of the Nile and reared by Pharaoh’s daughter, and Israel as a people was born at the crossing of the Red Sea, and a second time at the foot of Sinai. Surely this might be supposed to satisfy the curious interpreter. So many historic facts or legends summarized by the one statement! It is difficult for us to transport ourselves into an age when mental processes were so far other than ours, for it clearly seems that the Lord Jesus could not well have satisfied all the requirements made of the Messiah unless He had been driven from Bethlehem in Joseph’s care, and his mother had been visualized as sitting under the shadow of the Sphinx, her little babe cuddling in her arms.

“Out of Egypt have I called my son.” Other meanings besides did it seem to have than those above indicated; for did not the Holy Scriptures, which were in one sense at least the Word of God, and mystically the Son of that Wisdom which wrought with God ere the beginning of things, was not it called also out of Egypt in the Septuagint version for its steady proselytising among seekers of a new religion throughout the then civilized, that is to say Hellenic, world? The Bible came to the Eastern Mediterranean and to the Western also out of Egypt.

“Out of Egypt have I called my son.” Was it not there that Plato married Moses in some mystic way, so that Philo the Jew dazzled the devout of cosmopolitan culture and aspiration with that theory of the logos, of the Word of God, which made it possible for the reputed writings of St. John and for the letters of St. Paul to work out a theory of the Christ in cosmic terms, which might safely obscure and leave out of view the merely racial or even narrowly national hopes of a Messiah? Jesus, as the Word of God,

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was called out of Egypt then to His throne of glory, whence he might exercise a veritable world dominion as no Cæsar ever dreamed?

And later it would seem that in Egypt we had the first truly Christian people, without record of an initial struggle between heathenry and the Gospel. The blessed Mary had replaced Isis, the little babe Jesus had replaced Horus, the passion of Christ had superseded the suffering and dying of Osiris, the Christian cross had been set up instead of the "Tet" or fourfold cross with flail and crook in right and left, and Christ, called to the judgment of the dead, fulfilled all the functions of the righteous judge and the rewarder of the holy. In Egypt appeared the illumined scholar Origen, the gracious spiritual philosopher St. Clement, of Alexandria; there also was fought out truly the great battle concerning the human divine sonship of Christ between Arius, the champion of the human reality, and Athanasius, the champion of the Divine Condescension, both which must have met in the Master, who had mounted the thrones of Osiris and Horus.

II

The religion of Egypt or rather the Gospel of Osiris and Isis and Horus reached Hellas in the fourth century B.C., Italy in the second, was officially recognized in Rome under Sulla 98 B.C., had a temple dedicated to it after the death of Cæsar in 44 B.C., and was carried by the imperial power far northeast into Germany, northwest into Yorkshire and south as far as the Sahara was penetrated by civilization. Even to the most superficial the "Ave Maria ora pro nobis," harks back to the Lady Isis, the martyr Dolorosa was Demeter in Hellas, but the sorrowing wife and once bereaved mother Isis is as evidently akin to her; the bambino and the madonna in popular religion throughout Latin Europe, and the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, emphasized more and more as the centuries have gone by, cannot but indicate their origin to the most superficial student of art and comparative religion; for if not an "origin" then at least a case of precursion and providential

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preparation of the most marvellous sort, must be presumed and confessed by the advocate of an absolute newness in the message of Jesus and the doctrine of the Christ.

Considerations of this kind, first suggested effectively by the delightful lecturer Dr. Lysander Dickinson, pursued the present writer for many years. Engaged in understanding Christianity as a world religion and as the ultimate religion, he believed, of the world, he desired to understand whatever went before and was leastwise prophetic of it in substance or form. The apostolic fathers who shared the culture of classic antiquity, all frankly, nay, in some cases, boastfully acknowledged the connection between Christianity and the highest and holiest things in paganism. They were not yet such pseudo-Semites as to accept *au bout de la lettre* the supposed divine monopoly of the seed of Abraham after the flesh. Surely St. Paul, the Jew and Pharisee, acknowledged Hellenic prophets and gentile leaders of occult religion. Even Augustine and Tertullian, hard and belligerent as was their temper, appreciated sympathetic kinship to cults and doctrines and spiritual experiences outside the "authorized" Semitic continuity. Indeed, it would have been difficult for the most dogmatic, with the then extant body of Greek religious literature, with the then still potential tradition of Roman piety, with the Persian-Babylonian missionary wave of Mithraism still pressing toward the Ultima Thule in the wake of the legionaries, to have insisted upon a merely Hebrew pedigree for all things divine.

Cured of this almost inevitably contagious folly of the unorthodox, this strange assumption of an alien race-egoism in the guise of legal adherence to a "legitimate" lineage, assured that Christianity gains as a world-religion when whatever Semitic roots it has are not chopped off, but the rather reinforced and supplemented by other roots reaching elsewhere into the great divine human soil, the present writer found himself compelled to evoke or recreate bygone symbols and rituals, mythic figures, theophanies, speculations that he might have at least vicariously, so to

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say, their value in him, and be enabled to rediscover his Christianity from this and that point of view, so as the better to include its Catholic variety and experience its various charms.

III

When the works of Budge, and later of Breasted, fell into his hands, he had the long anticipated delight of realizing the Egyptian antecedents of Christianity. Here was archeology reverently presented; here were the facts imaginatively understood and valued; here was inspiration and a sense at the same time of the authentic.

Having endeavored, as all rediscoverers since the beginning of time, to convey to others his own delight as a traveller in picturesque and strange regions, he labored to gather together and order for continuous dramatic development what seemed to him the most significant and sympathetic passages from old rituals, and work in as many as possible of those legends which give them interest and life for the modern reader. Having several times used these materials and knit them together by word of mouth, the problem of reducing them to epic consistency resulted in invoking the imagination. Here were two or three conflicting accounts of the death of Osiris, for instance, each having its singular interest because of its liturgic and moral connections. Manifestly, in telling the tale only one could stand, and there would be loss in two ways where there was gain in one. A device was had resort to, which would seem to have a real justification, namely, that one account should be retold as fact, and the others as hearsay or as the vivid fiction, always spiritually significant, of dreams. By the use of this simple device it was possible to preserve in a consistent narrative important variants.

The outcome of this endeavor to convey to others so far as possible the writer's own impressions and resultant delight, was naturally enough an effort to rephrase and connect together with writing in the same general spirit as the adopted or adapted fragments, until the whole should read aloud without comment exegetic or discursive. Hence this present work, "An Epic Lyric Cento and Rephrasing of Ancient Fragments: the Gospel of Osiris."

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IV

It may surprise the reader when it is frankly confessed that the author had no other purpose than to set forth this Gospel of Osiris; but that just as in ancient times it was the Goddess Isis who exercised her fascination beyond the frontiers of Egypt rather than her lord and husband or her lord son, so upon conclusion of the first draft it became astonishingly apparent that the work might, from the objective point of view, be more naturally considered a Lay of the Lady Isis! For, lo, she stood revealed the most thrilling woman-figure of the ages. Her sister Ishtar, her sister Demeter, her sister Aphrodite, her sister Hera, her sister Artemis, her sister Pallas Athene, ay, and many others less well known to us, are all in and of her. What is finest in the ancient queen of Palmyra, what is most striking in the good Queen Bess, what appals us in Katherine of Russia, ay, and somewhat of that which humbles us by its utter purity in Jeanne d'Arc, all is measurably present in this extraordinary figure. Great independent person, ambitious sovereign, typical wife, typical mother, priestess, prophetess, sybil—she is all, and ever more than each and all.

It is surely strange that out of Egypt should come the Son of God, and that with him should company the old and the new woman in one! It gives one an uncanny thrill, it piques curiosity, it entertains to the verge of laughter. After all, for thousands of years the human race has remained essentially the same; for how else could our uttermost revolts and prophetic aspirations have been anticipated thirty and more centuries ago? And yet, there is consolation herein also, for that which has been so long desired and believed in, must surely come to pass.

V

Once aware that the Gospel of Osiris had turned out in the literary sense after the most unbiased effort, a Lay of the Lady Isis, it was natural enough to dedicate the same to a woman who anticipated so much of what is now already fact, or is, at all events, political platform and practical agitation in free America. Be-

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cause her literary works have been long out of print, with the exception of "A Few Days in Athens," and because she was not violent enough in her contentions to invite exploitation by the radically offensive or destructive, she has almost ceased to be a living memory. In her day, however, she was an avatar to the radical, and an offense and horror and confusion to them who preferred the old ways. Sixty years after her death (she lies buried in Spring Grove, Cincinnati) a dedication of this Lay to her noble unselfish career, to her life of many sacrifices for belief and public duty, to her dream of emancipation without injury to property rights on the one hand, or to an unripe human nature on the other, will hardly seem unfitting to any save those who need to look up her name in a dictionary of biography, and take her books off the library shelf, and realize how short is the recollection that mankind seems able to grant one who fought so fair a fight in so finely bred, restrained, and noble a style.

All honor then to the Lady Isis, and may the women of our time who are restless and eager, and long for better things, rejoice in that knowledge of the human heart, ay, of the feminine heart, which the ancient Egyptians subconsciously at least possessed, since they gave full scope to it and expression in this, their noblest imagination, the Lady Isis.

WILLIAM NORMAN GUTHRIE.

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of Ancient Fragments

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I.

THE BATTLE OF HERU AND SUTI:
THE PRELUDE

I.

There was fear on earth:—

“As a lion he croucheth,
To spring and roar in glory
Upon Bakha, the mount of sunrise,
Between twin turquoise sycamores:

Hail Heru! the lion of God.

“Face of heaven, four ways looking,
Tossing out free his four locks of gold,
Sending his four sons forth to guard his course,
Four shining pillars upholding Shu, the sky:

Hail Heru! the man who is God.

“Lo, the golden hawk preeneth his plumes,
He beateth the air with his pinions,
He cleaveth the summit of heaven,
He mounteth, and hovereth in the heart of heaven:

Hail Heru! the hawk who is God.”

And there was war in heaven:—

“Forward he strideth the champion of the Gods,
(Heru, Heru!)

Erect is he, and terrible of mien.

(Heru, Heru!)

He shaketh his spear and his brazen bow,
He swingeth his sceptre as an awful mace,
As a crooked sickle flasheth his sword,
And the mightiest foe hath he laid low
As the grass on the billowy mead.”

The Rebel Angel confronted the champion:—

“Heru, behold thy brother of old time,
In the beginning, thy twin, thy fellow!

Ay, Suti is he who led

His company erstwhile of holy ones,

Ere he drew of envy downward

The primal sun-path through the zenith

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

And wrought the ruinous heat;
Ere he scorched the earth to a desert of sand,
Ere by cunning he stole from the sun-king
A portion of his godly glory,
Shortening the hours of his orbèd triumph;
Ere he made the waxing new moon of Tehuti,
The ibis-headed, who reckoneth and recordeth all in truth,
To wane and to perish
In the midmost heart of the ancient sky.
Thenceforth was he like thee no longer,
O Heru, thy brother Suti:
His changing shapes as the moods of his spirit
The grudging, the greedy, the wanton destroyer,
The outcast prowler, the furtive fear.
Thenceforth is he the hornèd antelope,
Wingèd and swift of pitiless hooves
That gallopeth through the desert amain,
That raiseth in red voluminous clouds
The infinite dry dust of death,
That choketh and buryeth the parchèd fields:—
Suti, the hurricane, Suti, the sand-storm,
Suti, that laugheth for murderous glee.

“His the fierce-tuskèd hippopotamus
That lumbereth and shaketh the earth;
The crocodile likewise whose jaws devour
The stars as they rise from the dewy horizon
And bathe them in the holy river, the Nile,
The crocodile, whose tail thresheth the torn clouds:
Suti, the ravenous!

“He is Apep, the dragon, the worm of evil,
Writhing and wallowing through the vasty deep;
And the thunder blasteth
And the lightning rippeth,
And the cloudbursts engulf the gracious green earth.

THE BATTLE OF HERU AND SUTI

"Suti, who knoweth no pity, no reverence,
A craven monster men deem him, the hyena
That prowleth in the cold, bare night,
And diggeth up the bones of the defenceless,
And skulketh to fall upon the sun and the moon
As they rest them in hallowed confiding sleep,
The slow waxing terror, he, of the swallowing eclipse—
For Suti abhorreth their glory
Alike of the golden day
And of the silver night.

"The secret pestilence is he, that creepeth cunningly
And stingeth in the carefree hour,
From father to son, from mother to babe—
And multitudes perish and wot not ever
Who smote them from craven ambush in the dark!

"Suti, ay Suti, is he:
The wicked one he,
The murderer of father,
The profaner of his mother,
The strangler of the newly born;
The felon, the madman,
The fanged, the hoofed, the horned,
Suti, the abominable, the abhorred!"

And Heru spake no word
Save only:

"What wouldest thou with me?"
"I would win thee my brother," quoth he,
"To bestow on me thy love
And bind thee with me in bonds of kindred."
"Out of thine own mouth wot I not well
That thou beest the grudger, the liar, the uprooter,
Breaker of troth, reviler,
Layer waste of sacred shrines,

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

Violator of the noble dead?
Wouldest thou win me to be even like unto thee—
Accuser? destroyer?
No brother of mine art thou,
But my enemy from everlasting;
And thee, even thee, must I overthrow.”

Then the twain terrible ones
Joined battle in the height and in the deep,
And the earth trembled to her foundation,
And the firmament rang with the cries of victory,
And the joy, therefore, did ebb and flow as the great sea:—

“Shout for Heru in the heavens,
For he leapeth, he prevaieth,
He standeth upright upon the monster,
With the spurning foot of the most swift.
He is master forever,
Unswerving, unwavering, unafraid.
The vasty feet of his adversary
Clank with the chain of thunder
The which Heru hath forged from the beginning for the foe;
He goadeth him with the spear of lightning
In the wounded all-devouring throat;
He driveth afar the trailing black storms,
He filleth the heaven with quivering brilliance,
And cleanseth them forever of the bats of the unclean.

“And lo, he cometh into the two lands,
Heru, as a man unto mankind,
As a mighty man of valor,
Followed of his brawny hosts.
And they set up the roaring forges,
And Heru, the power of the sunheat at noon,
Hath softened as the wax the stones of iron,
And his fellows swing with him their sledges
And fashion the weapons of the fighter.

THE BATTLE OF HERU AND SUTI

“Hail Heru, the mighty hunter!
He hath cleansed the two lands already,
And Ra rejoiceth in his son upon the earth
Who hath vanquished there also
The rebel Suti;
Who hath driven out from thence
And slain his demon hordes,
And made safe forever the abodes of men:
The pure worshippers of the sun,
Who bide along the holy river
Safely atween wilderness and wilderness,
Between wall of water and wallowing sea.
All hail, O Heru, Son of Ra,
Friend and saviour of man!”

II.

THE LOVES OF SEB, THE EARTH, AND OF NUT,
THE HEAVEN

II.

Now men did multiply exceedingly
Upon the bosom of the earth,
Until the fish failed them in the water,
And the game in the forest failed them,
For the forest forsook the lowlands
And left them desolate.
And men committed abominations
For scarcity of food.

Then Seb, great God of Earth;—
One red lion mouth to the East
 whence issueth the sun-orb,
One red lion mouth to the West
 that receiveth it again at sunset,
Through whose secret passage passeth at night
The sun, to rest him in his caves—
Great Seb lay stark along the earth.
He stretched one hand thereover in blessing,
And raised in supplication the other to heavenward :
 “Shall there not be found for man
 Who roameth as a beast over the surface of the earth,
 Who fainteth or raveneth for famine,
 Any kindly help at all from God?”

Then Nut, the great Goddess of the sky,
Which danceth tiptoe upon the mount of sunrise,
Which reacheth with her fingertips afar,
Even to the mount of sunset—
Starry-vestured Nut,
Over whose radiance saileth the sun in his pride,
She hearkened to the cry of Seb,
And she yearned unto him,—
For Nut was alone thitherto
And watered her sycamore with her tears.
And behold she did lift herself up
In the darkness as a mighty woman

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

Azure-vested, star-begemmed,
And caressed with her fingers high heaven.

And the mighty one,
The holy lady of heaven,
The mistress of the Gods, did cry aloud
In the longing of her heart:—

“Why comest thou not unto me,
O Seb of the trees and the green herbs?
Thou yearnest to help the sons of men?
And hast thou hearkened the oracle of old:
How the mighty God of goodness, the lord of abundant fruits,
How the mighty Goddess of beauty, dispenser of fair order,
Shall condescend in the fashion of men and women,
And over them establish kindly sway?
Ponder the mystery.
Whose offspring may they be but thine and mine?”

And Nut waxed faint, and she whispered:

“Come, come hither unto me

O my Lover, the Earth.”

“Woe is me that I am alone.”

Cried Nut the lonely Goddess,—

And Seb did moan in the awful stillness.

“I cannot rise,

I have no wings to mount unto thee on high—

Woe, woe is me,”

Made answer Seb, the yearning God.

And Nut cried:

“Alter thy form,

Escape from thy bondage,

Mount into the stars, O lover

As the moon, the gliding moon,

Red for passion, golden for gladness,

White for too great bliss;

LOVES OF SEB, THE EARTH, AND OF NUT, THE HEAVEN

Mount unto the throbbing bosom of the goddess,
Even unto the kiss of her silent lips."

And lo, the God of the green earth
Became transfigured into the shining moon,
And swam across the Nile of the sky
In the still cold magic of the night.
And lo, the Goddess of heaven
Had arrayed and bedecked herself
With a million million jewels,
That were dancing stars, for his delight.

And Nut was filled with a vision of gladness,
And she sang her thankful hymn:

"Hark I shall bear, I, a blessed mother, Him:—
The mighty to behold the good—
The mighty to reveal the unseen
Beauty and goodness made manifest,
Whose star is Sah, Orion—
Osar, my Lord Osiris.

"And Her, his lovely companion also:—
The pride to wear his glory,
The power to administer his kingdom,
The loyalty to serve and suffer,
Whose star dartleth at sunrise—
Sebt, the white Sirius,—
Ast, my Lady Isis."

Then of a sudden was Nut filled with heaviness,
And she sobbed out loud for the foreseen doom of sorrow:—
"Woe is me! Woe is thee!
Yet not otherwise might it have come to pass.
The thick darkness and clear light
Be foes inseparable ever,
The fruitful valley hemmed of the burning desert!

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

The arch foe of man—he also—
Though we willed him not,
Though we hated him from the beginning—
Suti, Set, shall be born of us,
Yea of thee and of me.
Yet for us is there comfort in store:
His gentle sister, the mild darkness,—his twilight shadow
That fain would woo, and cannot win him
Back to his ancient fair estate—
Nebthet, Nephthys, she too
Shall be born of thee and me!”

Then answered Seb unto Nut his beloved:—
“Albeit thou foresee unhallowed evil,
Not in vain, O Sky, have we loved, we twain!
Am not I the Earth that maketh to abound
The good things of Ra in their season?
And if the evil Suti of the North
Shall be born of thee as a man,
With his consort Nebthet of the South,
The mild Nephthys, that forsaking him
Would fain atone for the sin and the curse,—
Yet shall the blessed dispenser
Of the golden harvest of the West,
Osar, Osiris,
And the mistress of the dewy flowers and the morning star, Sebt,
Ast, Isis,
After much grief, sorrow, bereavement,
And agelong travail
Prevail!
We willed in our love the good only,
But the evil and foul ensued unbidden,—
Yet not without a blessing:
For so the good shall be wholly known for goodness,
And beauty worshipped as gracious and true!
Not in vain have we loved

LOVES OF SEB, THE EARTH, AND OF NUT, THE HEAVEN

Not in vain we twain—
O thou holy spiritual Goddess Nut of the starry sky,
And I,—unto myself, ere then a burden,
Low-lying beneath thy splendor,
The bestower of the sprouting verdure,
And the warder of the silent dead.”

III.

THE HAPPY REIGN OF OSAR AND AST

III.

And Osar and Ast do sit—
Lord Osiris and Lady Isis—
Upon the throne of the two lands,
And of all men are they belovèd.
He taketh the red crown of the North,
Where the holy river runneth
Through the marshes to the sea,
Where the hooded serpent
Uppeareth to hiss;
He taketh the white crown
Of the South,
Where the holy river windeth
And the vulture hovereth
Through the dancing heat.

And Isis said unto Osiris:—

“O my beloved, my king, my glory,
A vision is vouchsafed unto me,
A glad vision of good for men.
Behold,—how the wind yonder
Waveth the grass—
As ripples of sheen
Over the sacred stillness of the emerald
Sunlit lake?
It is the grain that shall nourish men,
With its golden kernels of ripe seed,
When game and fish wax scarce,
And the grudging desert of Suti
Yieldeth them naught for food.”

And Osiris grew glad with a great and holy gladness—

“O sister, my belovèd, my queen, my glory,
The vision vouchsafed unto thee
Be it mine to declare unto men.
Lo, forth must I fare through the kingdom
To publish the good tidings abroad:—
How that men are free henceforward

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

From the chances of the chase,
From the chances of the fishcatch,
From the savage madness of the manhunt!
How the grain that waveth o'er the earth
Shall redeem their lives from brutish violence,
That they may dwell forever
As brethren together,
Tilling the blessèd earth."

And Isis entreated :

"Go not forth, O my belovèd,
For then should I sorrow that I beheld
Ever in vision the salvation of men.
Let them come the rather to thee and profit
By the wisdom of their king!"

But Osiris reproved her in love :—

"Nay, behold, O Queen, so shall it even be!
The golden grain I gather in my hand
It shall not be for the sustenance of man.
Sown shall it be in the dawn
At the setting of the Pleiades.
As to a burial divine
Shall we scatter the sacred gift.
But lo, it shall rise again to life an hundredfold,
And men shall laugh for the great plenty,
And bask them in the ripening sun."

And Isis made moan :—

"Nay thine is a cruel omen!
Shall they live, belovèd, by thy death?"

Osiris, however, cried in gladness :

"My life sufficeth! and if thy reading of the omen,
O wise one, be true and I must die;
Do thou forget not the resurrection of the wheat,
Of the twinkling rye
Of the billowing barley."

THE HAPPY REIGN OF OSAR AND AST

ISIS :

“Nay, but if thou diest daily,
Where shall our joy be?
Where shall joy tarry for us O my king?

OSIRIS :

“In our son shall we see joy,
The son of our great-souled goodness to man !”

ISIS :

“What though he be thy son,
But begotten of thy wayward death,
And I bear him in widowhood,
And my heart ache and break
In loneliness for thee?”

OSIRIS :

Calm thy misgivings, belovèd,
Soothe thy boding heart.
Shall we withhold thy gifts from men;
And dole them alone
To the servants of our household,
And them that come from afar to hail our glory?
Not so. I shall publish abroad the gladness—
Thy good tidings far and wide through the two lands.
Farewell, my belovèd,
Abide in peace my return,
For long methinks shall I not tarry.
And if life do come only of death,
Mourn not for me too sorely
For so shall I go through death unto life,
An hundred, ay, a thousand-fold.”

And lo, the queen waxed proud
And quailed not any more.
She grasped a reed of the marshes,

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

A papyrus, for her sceptre,
She donned a head-dress of the vulture—
Wings, either side over her hearkening ears,
Fantail outspread behind,
Hooked beak lifted terrible aloft—
Over her brows serene!

And Osiris tarried for a moment,
Looking back at her with fondness,
And rejoiced greatly in his lordly pride:—
“No queen art thou
But a mighty goddess
O my beloved—
And through me a beneficent mother
Unto all mankind art thou!
A bestower of life and gladness
Of fostering love, wherefore,—
Rejoice! rejoice!”

And Isis haughtily smiled:—
“Art thou not still a greater God
That forsakest me to make me glorious,
Overcoming the evil with the good,
Carrying thy loving kindness, O my king,
Most mighty and most meek,
Unto the ends of the habitable earth?”

IV.

AST RULETH ALONE, AND DESIRETH
OMNIPOTENCE

IV.

“Am I a queen, a goddess?

Am I a woman

That longeth in humbleness for mine husband?

Do I hold sway

In his stead,

Upon his throne,

And it sufficeth not?

Without violence

I exercise authority,

And men are glad thereof;

For rule I not them with laws

Even such as my lord hath foreordained in their hearts,

And his will abideth in mine?”

“Yet wherefore is man subject

To evil all his days,

Or in the latter end thereof?

Whence hath the evil being?

Hath the Lord of the heaven fallen into error,

Not knowing what he wrought?

Hath he slumbered and forsooth another

His enemy, and yet his offspring,—

Else how otherwise begotten in earth or heaven?—

Hath wrought evil that the great God might not let,

Nor bring to nought? Nowise.”

“Howbeit if the Supreme

Hath willèd so the evil

For the humblest children of men,

Shall not the evil as surely

Smite him also? Dwelleth not

Likewise as deeply, as mightily,

The law in Him?

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

- "The law of my bosom
Is it not lord of his bosom?
And shall he then withhold what is his to bestow?
To be as God—
Shall we desire it;
And find not the powers in God thereunto?
Queen would I be
Of the star, Sebt, Sirius,
That dwelleth yonder in the dawn-sky,
As the Nile swelleth
To flood with gold
The low-lying lands, and array them in green.
- "Ha! I shall surely take
Of the moist loam and shape me
A serpent to hiss in the straight path of the Sun-God!
For, hath he made evil,
Then evil shall smite him,
Ay, in the heel of the wayfaring God!
- "Now do I breathe upon thee.
Feelest my life-giving breath,
O Serpent of my fashioning?
Ha! thou art quick and death-dealing, my creature!
Stand not up as a threatening sceptre.
Lie thou lowly, in craft and cunning.
Hiss not aloud of a sudden in his ear
The dread doubt of my woman's heart!
For lo, I believe him, yea, woe's me, I believe him
Yet do I worship not.
Sting him my serpent, thou subtle doubt,
Thou doubt of his goodness
Thou doubt of his godhead
That demandeth his Name, his secret name.
- "Declare thou thine inmost nature, O God!
For till I love thee,

AST RULETH ALONE, AND DESIRETH OMNIPOTENCE

I will not believe,
Nor till I believe—
I will not fear!"

And the face of the queen was troubled
And her heart was vexèd sore.

Now Ra, the ancient of days,
Was waxen old, men said,
For long it was he had not renewed
The revelation of his great glory.
And men had forgotten his ancient wisdom,
And his names, that were manifold,
Withheld their blessèd meaning,
And inspired not power or awe,
So that even the most high Gods
In their holy fellowship knew them at all no more.

Wherefore Ra, the Supreme Father
He seemèd to totter through the door of the East
Golden garmented,
Followed of his radiant ever young attendants,
And he leaned upon his staff,
And the sight of his eyes failed him
For very age.
He saw not the crouching doubt at all,
The doubt of the woman's heart
That lay moveless and dumb along his wonted way.
He fared past it, for he recked not of it,
And lo, it was a swift foe to smite,
And stang his heel unhindered, unheeded.

Then suddenly the holy and glorious God
He opened his mouth for anguish,
And his cry rang through the heaven
And shook the silences
To a many throated shrieking terror.
All the Gods, his sons, cried out in answer

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

A myriad echoes from the vastness :
"What evil hath befallen our father?
That he summoneth us unto him
With so terrible a voice,
Fear and utter anguish in the cry?"

When the great and holy God
Had established his heart,
He made answer unto his gathered children :—

"I am the sacred essence.
My being is in every God.
I have multitudes of Names,
Yet my inmost very Name
Is hidden within me from all gods,
Lest any creature of my hands
Or God-son of mine essence
Do get dominion over me!
Behold, O mine offspring,
That which lifted against me
As I live, I created it not.
Yet my heart burneth within me.
I am hotter than fire,
My flesh doth quake exceedingly,—
I am colder than the water,
Yet it is neither fire nor water.

"Let all my children
Assemble themselves together,
(The Gods unto whom I gave in trust
Everlasting words of power,)
That they may discern mine enemy
Who hath smitten my heel in secret,
And let them stay the poison of his wound
Ere I perish, and ye all with me."

AST RULETH ALONE, AND DESIRETH OMNIPOTENCE

And lo, Isis, the queen,—

The sorceress, she that longed
For the greatness of the Godhead,
She that doubted of his goodness,
She that yearned
But worshipped not,—
She came also in the company
After all the Gods had sought and found not
The remedy for the deadly hurt
Of Ra, their Father.

And Isis spake softly unto Ra, the God:—

“What aileth thee O holy Father?
What evil of no man’s doing
Hath smitten thine inmost life?
I pity thee, yet I worship not;
I believe not, yea and fear thee not.
Wherefore perchance, great Ra,
May I the better serve thee.
Speak, is it a serpent that hath wounded thy heel?
Surely the Good hath wrought no evil.
Surely no thing thou hast created
Hath lifted up its head against thee wantonly?”

But Ra in anguish heeded not her speech,
He cried aloud once more:

“I quake exceedingly,
Mine eye hath no strength left,
That I cannot see the sky.
My glory is in eclipse
In the black maw of the destroyer!
Bring ye help speedily
If ye would perish not even with me.”

And Isis trembled at her own boldness,
Yet confessed not, and entreated softly:—

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

“Who art thou in very deed
O my Father,
That I might know thee truly?
Make haste to tell me thy Name
That I might recall thy very self
Unto thyself again,
For verily whoso shall be delivered, O Father of all living,
By thine own Name, shall live forever.”

Then spake unto the queenly woman,
Unto Isis of the wooing voice,
The mighty Father from of old,
Of Shu the abundant light,
Of Tefnut, the womb of the showers,
Who produced all things that live
Out of Nu the waters of the abyss,—
Truthfully spake he and yet with guile:

“Shall I not tell thee O daughter
Mine inmost being?
Wherefore shall I hide aught
From thine eyes that search out truth
To bring salvation?
I am the creator:
I have made the heavens,
I have stretchèd out the two horizons
Like a curtain,
I have placed the souls of the Gods
In their inmost selves.
I have knit together the mountains
In unbroken fellowship,
I have poured and parted the waters
In seas and rivers and pools.
I have made the delight of love,
And the consuming fire of life.
I am Kheper Ra, the golden beetle,

AST RULETH ALONE, AND DESIRETH OMNIPOTENCE

That rolleth up the sun-disk
In the morning;
I am Ra, the intolerable splendor
In the hot noonday;
I am Temu who flusheth glorious
In the quiet eventide."

"Yet art thou," quoth Isis, "not also, Osar, Osiris,
In the twilight, in the night season?
Wilt thou mock me in the hour of thine own grievous peril?
With what name shall I summon thy true self unto thine aid?
Speak sooth, great Father Ra,
For the unknown, the unnamed,
The uncalled, by his true name—
Is as though he were not forever,
And shall stead thee not at all, O God!"

And lo, the God waxed weaker
And his breath fast failed him,
For the questing eagerness of Isis.
"I have spoken, O daughter," quoth Ra,
"Sooth hast thou said," quoth Isis.

"Yet what thou hast spoken
Is not thy secret Name!
So much knew all thy children,
Yet fended not they from thee
The sudden and subtle evil
That was not of thy fashioning,
O Maker of all that is,
The which smote thee to slay thee—
For that thou hidest thy Self
The very Name of Names,
And withholdest from thy children the power
To heal and to bless.
Yet he alone shall live
Of the Gods as God henceforward

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

Whose Name is revealed openly
Unto man in deed and truth."

And Ra, trembled for great anguish of fear:—

"I grant that Isis shall search me,
O ye Gods, my innumerable sons,
And fathom the mystery of mine essence,
That my holy unknown Name
May pass even from me in to her.
I charge thee, therefore, O my daughter,
Fear not to know the truth,
Ay, the truth that is hidden,
In the inmost dark,
Of the too exceeding light!"

And the eyes of Isis were opened,

And she lookèd into Him, the Supreme Father,
And she knew him no more thereafter
As the agèd and tottering God,
For she had beheld the secret glory
Of his quickening ever self-renewing youth,
And she spake in the might of that Name
The unutterable Name of Names:—

"Let the poison of my doubt

Perish utterly,
And let the glorious Ra, our Father,
Live forever!"

And she alone of Gods and men,

The Lady Isis,
Knew Ra by his own most sacred Name,
The sorceress and queen.
And Ra spake unto Isis,
Benign, refulgent,
Awaking as from an evil dream:

"Lo, I am even the glory thou dost conceive,

AST RULETH ALONE, AND DESIRETH OMNIPOTENCE

Great mother-Goddess of mankind.
Nevertheless, though the star Sebt be thine,
That trembleth at the dawn,
And though the green waters of fertility,
Of the holy river, rise to greet thee,—
Yet shalt thou be as any woman
Forgetting the most potent Name,
Which I have made thee for to know,
On the day when thou shalt invoke in vengeance,
To do evil unto the evil, ay even unto the worst,
The power of my most holy ever beneficent Name.”

And Ra, the gracious,
The ever self-renewing—
Became intolerably glorious,
Beauteous with all beauty,
And Isis woke as if from sleep,
And worshipped awestricken in the dawn:—
“For thy sake, O my belovèd,
For the sake of our only son
Unborn, yea unbegotten,
Have I conquered the Supreme,
And am mistress of his Name,
The ever self-renewing,
Intolerably glorious,
Beauteous with all beauty
Superlative, supreme,
That enlighteneth from the midmost heart of heaven
The thick darkness in the congealed deep,
Ay, the nethermost hell,
And bringeth to naught
The subtlety of the crafty one,
The malice of the wicked;
For, knowing now, I love,
And loving, lo, I do worship—
Yea, and wield for good only thy power, O God!”

V.

SUTI AND NEBTHET

Now Suti, the brother of the king
 Conspired against Osiris
 Most mighty and most meek.
 And he rode upon the wingèd akhekh,
 The autelope of the wilderness,
 Hither and thither in the night-season;
 And he sowed the seed of discontent
 As the clouds of dust abroad,
 And whispered the secret of envy
 As the blasting breath of the desert,
 And all the green of the land did droop,
 And parched it hung, and ready to perish:—
 “Lo, he hath abandoned the rule of his great ones
 To win him the favor of the basely born,
 The tillers of the soil, the herders of the kine!
 And lo, he hath won in secret
 The love of his brother’s spouse unto himself.
 The lady of mine heavenly house
 Nebthet, the gracious Nephthys is mine no more;
 For, when I visit her, she smileth not,
 Wherefore, the child that shall be born of her—
 Verily is it, or no, true child of mine?”

Unto the lady Nephthys spake he thus:—
 “Wherefore is my brother preferred before me?
 Is he found better than I, in sooth,
 Because the first to see the light?
 More acceptable unto Ra,
 The holy Lord of the two lands?
 If Ra be holy and his ways equal,
 Shall not the worthier win obedience
 Of the Uraeus of the North
 In the reeds of the marshes,—
 Of the vulture of the South
 Hovering above the lillies?”

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

But the lady Nebthet made reply,
The lady of his heavenly house,
The gracious Nephthys, sister and spouse:—
“For shame, O envious and wicked!
How shall I leastwise love thee
Who conspirest with malice?
Shall I not cherish more fondly
The sister that loveth me truly,
And my Lord, true husband of my sister,
That hath to great station preferred thee,
And shall shield and foster
Thy first begotten child,
Anpu, whom thou dost cherish not,
Anubis, whom, unborn yet, thou hast cursed?”

“Lo, if he, our unborn Son, shall hate thee
Shall it not be of thine own choosing,
Thou envious
And jealous at heart,
Thou subtle
And murderous in spirit,
Thou, whom I have loved,
Woe’s me, too passionately—
That I shudder thereat now
For piteous womanly shame?”

And Suti laughed aloud:—

“Behold, have not I a cause?
Hath not the foolish woman, my spouse,
Given me a cause against my brother,
And kindled a fire wherewith to slay him?”
And Suti laughed, for evil joy,
And Nephthys turned from him in hate, and sorrow, and shame.

VI.

ANPU ACKNOWLEDGETH NOT HIS
FATHER SUTI

VI.

SUTI:

"Son, hast thou verily hearkened
Unto the base counsel of thy mother?"

ANPU:

"Thou art not in sooth my father,
Save that thy bitter curse
Hath ta'en from me my human features,
Hath given unto me the countenance
Belonging to the howler of the night!
Yet notwithstanding, no ravening wolf am I,
With bristling mane to follow thy hiss of hate—
But a faithful dog at my fosterer's heel."

SUTI:

"Wilt thou publish so unto all
The sin of thy mother, fool?"

ANPU:

"Nay, but acknowledge thereby the rather
The excellent beauty of my Lord
In loyalty and love."

SUTI:

"A sire wouldest thou prefer thee
Who chooseth the slime of the Nile,
The tiller of the soil, the herder of the kine?
Who withdraweth from thee the light of his countenance?
Preferring such offal before thee?"

ANPU:

"O father of my flesh,
Thine am I no longer,
Thine was I never.
I belong henceforward altogether

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

Unto the fosterer of my spirit,
Whole-heartedly unto the good,
Worshipfully unto the most beauteous:
Unto Him, that maketh his abode forever
Within mine inmost heart,
Most mighty, and most meek."

SUTI:

"And wilt thou not the rather
Be king thyself in his stead?"

ANPU:

"Not by thy succor and preferment.
Avaunt, O tempter and seducer!
Woe is me that I am begotten
Of this evil one, flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone!
And blessed be the good and holy,
My mother, and my fosterer—
The far-away farer whom I long for,
The bearer in kindness of good tidings to men,—
Him that begat me not, yet reared me
Unto his inner likeness, for that I loved him
Ere I yet beheld and knew him,
The blessed Lord of my loyal soul."

SUTI:

"O foolish and perverse Son,
That wilt not make a covenant
Unto thy health with the mighty,
That is thine own sire,
And thou his only heir!
Who then is this false Osar
That rideth home in triumph?
And shall he not be smitten
A corpse by the holy river,
Ere he return to Ast

ANPU ACKNOWLEDGETH NOT HIS FATHER SUTI

The covetous, wicked sorceress-queen?
Ha, shall she not send forth the slayers
Herself to smite her lord,
Lest he take from her the kingdom back,
That seemeth, from long wont, her own?
Wottest thou her secret, O son of folly,
How that she would alone hold sway?
Hath she not sent thee forth to greet him,
That she may have wherewith to accuse thee after,
When thou shalt pay the price of her foul deed?"

ANPU:

"Avaunt!
I may not slay thee,
That art the sire of me, after the flesh,
Albeit I hate thee sore.
But thy followers
That be with thee,
Lo, I shall slay them,
Nor shall I hold back the loyal
That be not bound to thee as I, woe's me,
That would destroy thee, traitor!"

And Suti laughed for scorn:—

"Anpu, O followers of Suti,
The dogfaced, is my misgotten son no longer.
Heed not though the cur do snarl!
Let the fangless bark and bay
And fawn on the foot that spurneth him!
We will go forth and valiantly win us our own.
Let the bravest of you be son to me,
In the stead of Anpu. Hence!"
And Suti with his evil followers
Gat them unto their fastness
In the parchèd wildeness. And it was night.

VII.

SUTI THE TRAITOR AND OSAR

VII.

SUTI:

“Lo I have come forth to greet thee!
Returnest thou O my brother in glory
Unto thy kingdom, long expected, greatly desired?
Thy queen waiteth for thee and thy people!”

OSIRIS:

“Yet in mine absence all the while have I been with them,
And have reigned for a whole moon of years,
Diligently teaching unto the humblest
The blessings of plenty and peace:
The waving wheat, the rye and barley,
The fruit of everlasting life!”

SUTI:

“I have sued unto the Queen
That she expect thee on the throne,
And that I only go before to greet thee,
For am not I the nighest of kin unto thee?
And wottest thou well how she hath won
With spells and cunning craftiness
Unwomanly power and ungodly over Ra,
Wherewith she shall make even thee
To bow before her in worship—
The king unto the queen,
The lord unto his handmaid?
Beware then of her crafty skill and her ensnaring beauty.
And let us, dear brethren together,
Ere yet it be too late
Take secret counsel against her.”

OSIRIS:

“How shall I deem her—a wife, a queen—disloyal?
Or that truth shall ever fail the righteous?
Have not I diligently served my people
For one long moon of years?
But how little is the season

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

Of a man's whole span of life
To the innumerable ages
In Tuat, the world of death!
How then shall we serve them,
O my brother of subtle thoughts,
Whole-hearted in life and in death?
Unto this rather take we counsel together.
How else shall we win the queen—
If thou speak sooth concerning her—
And thy spouse Nebthet,
The gracious Lady of thy heavenly house,
Who is ever faithful to the desire of her sister,—
That they seek not pomp and glory,
But the love in their stead of the common folk,
And the hailing shouts of their little ones
Clinging at the breast,
Hand clapping and crowing in their lap?"

SUTI:

"Well spoken hast thou, what thou hast said,
Wherefore send forth, O brother,
Our retinue of splendor—
Thine, even as mine—lest they trouble us—
So shall we confer more meetly, brother with brother,
Alone by the holy river."

OSIRIS:

"Leave us in sacred conference,
O my kindred, and all people
Sent to hail my home-coming,
Leave ye, as beseemeth them, brother alone with brother,
Alone by the holy river."

SUTI:

"Hearken now, O brother, my parable
That yieldeth his meaning only in thine inmost ear:

SUTI THE TRAITOR AND OSAR

The waters of the green Nile
Stole up beyond his proper bank,
And not content with overflowing the land of Ast,
He rose in the darkness higher
Unto the borders of my parched desert;
And behold, he flooded the barren land,
And it sprouted in the twilight—
And she was mine no longer forevermore.”

OSIRIS :

“I read not thy parable aright!”

SUTI :

“Hearest thou not, hearken,
Anpu, thy son Anubis,
Thy faithful hound, my brother?
He bayeth afar, outsped by me
Who would fain have thee read my riddle!”

OSIRIS :

“I wot not well what thou sayest.
Thy meaning is dark, though thine eyes do shine.”

SUTI :

“Yet askest thou how it might be granted thee
To serve them better, thy people in Tuat?
Lo, thou hast foolhardily,
A man of war no longer,
Come home without kingly weapons,
Thy servile flail of the threshing floor,
Thy crook of the sheepfold,
Alone in either craven hand!
Fool and presumptuous!
Perish, therefore, thou traitor unto the kingship,
Like a slave, without battle bow thee,
Lie low in the foul ooze.

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

Let thy tame blood flow out of thy wounded side,
And make the waters to run red!
Yet hark, ere thou speed hence,
By the kind help of thy brother
Shalt thou go hence, explore ere thy due time
The secret of Tuat, the underworld:
Hath not Ast, thy belovèd,
Learned the most exalted name of the Supreme?
Perchance she shall bystand thee
And bring unto thy stricken soul salvation
From the horrors of Hell,
From the teeth of the hyena,
From the jaws of the crocodile,
From the tramp of my hippopotamus,
From my snakes, that devour the corrupted dead.
Kindly unto the basely bred,
Unkingly, despising thy birthright,
Die not yet, O good Osiris,
Breathe not yet thy last,
For hark! hark once again! Anpu bayeth, thy son.
Little wotteth he where thou liest,
Yet, thou canst not cry out now for succor,
And he shall not find the bleeding body of his master,
For he hath not the keen scent of the bloodhound—
The base son thou didst beget in thy brother's stead!
Wherefore among the silver reeds and the slime
Shall thy fear-smitten soul
Perish together with thy body!"

Ha, he is dead!

"Ho, hither my followers in ambush,
I have slain the false and the craven,
And I am next of kin, your very lord now, your king!
For he is dead, who was fain to defy God,
Withholding not grace from the lowly

SUTI THE TRAITOR AND OSAR

Kindly unto the basely born,
Unkingly, despising the holy birthright
Of him that sitteth on high
In the room of Ra upon the earth.
Let us seize upon the throne straightway,
The lofty throne of the two kingdoms,
While Ast the bereaved shall search in vain
For the dead body of her beloved Lord."

VIII.
SUTI AND ISIS

VIII.

SUTI:

"Great Queen, that hast the secret of Ra,
I bring thee woeful tidings, alas!
The followers of the king have foully slain him.
They have fled, the coward traitors,
For that their bloodguiltiness is openly known."

ISIS:

"What sayest thou? The good king hath perished?
My beloved? My Lord?
It is impossible. Thou liest to prove me."

SUTI:

"It is abominable so to lie;
Woe is me who am chosen to afflict the queen!
I outsped my dutiful son Anubis,
That I might be the first to greet him.
But his retinue could answer not
My inquiries after their missing Lord.
Toowhelmed with horror was I to exact vengeance,
And ere I was 'ware they had fled
And taken refuge in the outer dark."

ISIS:

"I will go forth straightway and seek his body,
Lest his immortal soul find not his rest!"

And the queen lifted her eyes on high
And she wept not for proud sorrow.
"Is this the blessing, O Ra,
Thou awardest unto thy king?
O Seb, our father,
Where dost thou hide thy son?
O Nut, our mother,
Where dost thou weep over him?"
And the queen spake unto her horror-stricken lords,
Unto her men of war, her loving servants:

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

“Forth, all ye mighty men of valor,
Pursue after the slayers of your king!
Go ye east unto the mountain of sunrise!
Go ye west unto the mount of sunset!
Go ye south unto the wall of water above the heavens!
Go ye north unto the swallowing deep sea!
I myself shall go unto the river alone
As is most meet,
In quest of my slain Lord.”

NEBTHET:

“Nay, I shall go with thee, my sister.”

SUTI:

“Wilt thou not tarry with thy husband, O my consort?”

NEBTHET:

“How shall I seek not first the body of our brother?”

SUTI:

“Fare thee well then, O handmaid of the dead,
Sister of the outcast, and God-forsaken!
Ah, it is well. Over the sorceress
Your Lord, hath triumphed gloriously!
In her great grief forgot she not
The word of power, the Name of Ra?
The terror of the woman and wife.
Overbore the pride of queen and goddess!
And she hath scattered abroad her servants
That they may not fight their master's foe!
Now shall the throne be established
In the hands of a mighty man of valor
One worthy to be King over the valiant,
That cherisheth his birthright
Of him that sitteth in the room
Of Ra, and lordeth it

SUTI AND ISIS

Over the whole earth!
Not, O my followers, my faithful,
Shall I of you be found wayfaring,
Ensueing salvation for the outcast folk,
Blessing the children of squalor with unearned plenty,
And the sons of scorn with false wisdom and knavish peace.
A glorious king shall at length rule over you,
Unto deeds of shining terror.
And when Isis shall at last bethink her
Of requital and revenge,
Naught shall her wisdom avail her at all
Against the lawful lord, her brother,
The nighest of kin, the heir of her deceased beloved!
She shall have spoken the holy name for naught
In wrath (not wotting who was doer of the foul deed),
And so shall she have lost forever its power.
Nor shall there be an heir of the dead,
Belated fruit of his body,
To wreak vengeance in the end!
Lord of all at last, O Seb, O Nut,
Is the son whom in your folly
Ye loved not, preferring his elder before him—
Him ye would fain have rejected utterly,
Of whom else shall ye henceforth be proud?"



IX.

AST FINDETH THE BODY OF HER
BELOVED SLAIN

IX.

ISIS :

“O my sister Nebthet,
If we find not our brother,
How shall not his spirit wander
Without rest through the waste places?
Shall he wail in the night wind?
Shall he cry to us in the howlet's hoot?
Shall the glorious king be forgotten,
Lost to the gratitude and worship
Of men alike and of Gods?”

NEBTHET :

“Be comforted, my sister.”

ISIS :

“It is well for thee, whose husband
Is nighest of kin unto the dead.”

NEBTHET :

“Not shall my son be disloyal,
Nor shall I acknowledge a traitor as lord.”

ISIS :

“Nay, my sister, forgive my grief
That lightly accuseth the faithful.”

NEBTHET :

“It is dark. Let us fare no further.”

ISIS :

“Nay, here we may not tarry
Lest the raveners of the night
Tare the blessèd body of my belovèd!”

NEBTHET :

“Beware, lest thou stumble suddenly
For the thick darkness into some snare,

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

Lest we sink into the quicksand,
And none there be to deliver us,
And none be left to seek out farther
The body of thy beloved!"

ISIS:

"Nay, nay my sister
The grief-stricken knoweth no fear.
Ha! What is this at my feet,
At my very feet, that clingeth to me?
Is it a sheaf of the harvest
Half buried for resurrection?
I cannot see, O Nephthys."

NEBTHET:

"It is but a furrow ridge of fertile soil.
Let us tarry for the morrow."

ISIS:

"Nay I will have light.
O Sebt, my star in the heaven,
I may not tarry for thy rising.
I will wave my hair in the heavy gloom
Till there be light."

NEBTHET:

"O my sister, Do not so!
Wilt thou hasten the dawn of sorrow?"

ISIS:

"I will wave my hair
Until the light sufficeth."

NEBTHET:

"It is Osiris!"

AST FINDETH THE BODY OF HER BELOVED SLAIN

ISIS :

“He is not dead, he sleepeth !
Awake, O my belovèd,
That didst seize the ankles of the goddess
In the passion of thy love-dream !”

NEBTHET :

“Nay, he is wounded.”

ISIS :

“Thou art hurt, O my belovèd ?”

NEBTHET :

“His heart is silent !”

ISIS :

“Some wicked one hath indeed slain him !
O my belovèd,
It was all in vain
I mastered Ra, the Father of Heaven,
To make thee a God immortal !
Thou hast perished ere I might whisper in thine ear
The word of power, the secret Name !
Speak, who hath slain thee,
Thee whom all men loved ?”

NEBTHET :

“It is, woe’s me ! none other than Suti.
Lo, the weapon of my husband !
O Osiris, thou gracious one,
Forgive, forgive thy sister
That she was wedded unto thy foe !”

ISIS :

“O Osiris, belovèd,
Most mighty and most meek, in earth and heaven,

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

Thou shalt be avenged,
According to the loving kindness of thy spirit!
Not in vain gat I the word of power,
The secret Name of the most Highest.
Ra, Ra, I call upon thee
By the unspeakable name!
I whisper it in thy most holy ear
That neither the living, nor the dead,
But thou only shall hear it,
And answer to its awful call.
I will avenge my beloved,
The well wisher of his fellows,
Who perished at the hand of the wicked.
O unnameable, whom I have named,
Hearken, and heed!
Lo, I cast me upon the dead,
Upon the beloved of my soul,
The gentle, the forgiving,
Who lived that he might bless mankind.
Make thou me, O Ra,
To bear Him that shall take his part
Against the adversary!
O beloved, I tremble,
Thine avenger, thy terrible Redeemer liveth,
For the dead, he hath begotten,
And the bereaved one hath conceived!"

NEBTHET:

"Thou art mad, O my sister."

ISIS:

"I am the bitterness of wrath!
He shall be avengèd, horribly avengèd
Upon the slayer, shall he be avengèd!"

NEBTHET:

"So be it!"

AST FINDETH THE BODY OF HER BELOVED SLAIN

ISIS :

“Woe’s me ! Woe’s me !
Hast thou forsaken her that brought healing
Unto thee, O most holy Ra ?
Now am I utterly bereaved, O my belovèd,
All power is taken from me
To do thee good in thy latter end.”

And lo, a shadowy figure, Ibis-headed—
Came there to the twain sisters, and he spake :—

“Bear the body unto the barque
Moored nearby on the river bank.
In the divine barque of the sunset
Let him that was bruised and wounded,
The most mighty, the most meek,
Yea, let the Prince of the West be ferried
To a joyous place of rest.”

And Nephthys cried in great amaze :—
“It is Tehuti !”

And the Angel of the Supreme
Spake softly unto Isis the bereaved :—

“Ra hath heard thee, He the holy one,
O queen of the morning star,
Thee, whose tears do swell the river
That it riseth over the land,—
According unto thy prayer shall it be done unto thee :
Thou shalt bear, unto thy Lord, a son,
Him that was in the beginning
The lord of light and life,
To avenge the Good and Kind
Upon the evil one.”

And Nephthys and Isis
Gently bare Osiris and brake not his slumber,
And laid him with tender reverence

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

In the barque of Tehuti,
Afloat on the rippling waters of the Nile.
And lo, it was he no longer,
The recorder of good and evil deeds,
But Anubis who chanted low:—
 “Bear softly, O holy river,
 The body of my foster father
 Unto his long abode!”
And Isis cried aloud, and Nephthys wept.

X.

HONOUR TO THE DEAD OSAR

X.

“He is dead, the gracious and true,
 We have laid him on a bier of rushes,
 Naught else had we whereon to bear him
 Unto the sacred Seker-boat.”

And lo the boat it was very high
 Above the rippling waters of the Nile,
 Its head, the head of Hennu, the gazelle,—
 In its middle lay a sacred chest
 Wherover hovered a golden featured hawk.
 And Anpu, Anubis, reared most terrible
 His dog's head, his bristling neck,
 The face now golden, now black,
 As in alternate pulses of the light.
 And Anpu, Anubis, steered the boat,
 And Ast, Isis, stood at the feet of the dead,
 And Nephthys at the head of the dead,
 To protect the blessèd dead
 By the melody of their voices.
 Though their eyes streamed with sorrow,
 They sang for love of Osar:—

“The star Sah, Orion, hath set forever,
 The mighty belted Lord
 Who spreadeth out his arms to the top of heaven,
 And bestrideth the mountain,
 But the evil envious brother,
 He watched unsetting,
 With his seven glittering eyes forever
 From the north, Septentrio, his house of heaven.
 Yet shall he fade out at the last,
 When the star Sebt, Sirius,
 Like one solitary beacon of the dawn,
 Dartleth above the flushed horizon.”

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

And all the people assembled, mourning:—

“He is dead, the gracious and true,
The good king who taught his people
To sow the divine seed of the grain
In the shallow furrow of the grave;
And gather thence an hundredfold
Benedictions of plenty and peace.”

And for a token of all he wrought,
Before them went two jet black cows
Yoked to a plough of tamarisk wood,
The share whereof was of black copper.
And there followed a boy who scattered
Freely abroad over the furrow
The seed of the barley, of the spelt, and of the flax.
And there followed a maiden chaste and fair
And she poured from a golden ewer
The fresh waters of the swollen river.
And lo, the God of justice, Thoth, Tehuti, came
Ibis-headed searching the hidden recesses;
And the Goddess also, Maat, of truth and righteousness,
With her twin ostrich plume, light as the air.
And lo, a lion drew nigh
Unto the holy chamber where they would lay him.
Entering by its westward gate,
He clawed him steadfast in the pure glittering sand,
And lifted his threatening head with clinging mane of gold,
And lifted in wrath his tail erect—
That he might thenceforth be a bier forever unto the holy God.
And under the lion on whose willing back they laid him,
Two hooded serpents lifted themselves on guard;
And tall over the sacred head to eastward,
Balanced on its tail, throbbing its checkered green and yellow
wings,
Crowned with the red crown,
Hung the terrible Uraeus of the North.

HONOUR TO THE DEAD OSAR

At his sacred feet, over the lifted tail of the lion,
Soared the vulture, crowned with the white crown.

And over him they set a canopy
Built at the head as of four reeds from the marshes,
Other four also at the feet, and four reeds lengthwise
Upheld the canopy. And there hovered
A glorious and terrible golden hawk
Above the holy and beloved.

Anpu, Anubis, brought the vessel of the sacred ointment
When the air swooned with the precious perfume thereof.
And others, his servants, brought the coffin of mulberry-wood,
Very precious, wrought most cunningly,
And laid it on sycamore boughs.
Then Isis kneeled at his feet adoring
And Nebthet at his sacred head,
After Anpu, swathed the dead god with linen bands,
And sheathed him in threefold linen sheets,
The while over him spread the glory of his mother Nut.

Behold, at his head there sprang over the sacred chamber
A goodly sycamore broad-branching,
The sycamore of his Mother Nut—
In token of her heavenly ever-present care;
And seven persea trees, laden with juicy fruit,—
And it seemed to them a bitter jest.
Wherefore, they set up the fourfold cross,
As the support to prop the sacred roof
With a holy rood, the Tet,
At top whereof they set
As it were the face of the blessed Osar:
The flail of the threshing floor,
The crook of the sheepfold,
In either hand of the upraised image!

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

And they cried aloud: "Blessed Osar, Lord Osiris,
It is in honour of thee, yea, of thee,
Who didst plant the persea tree
And gavest thy folk the sweet
Fruit thereof to eat,
Who didest teach the vine to clamber
Clinging with its tendrils to the lifeless tree,
And to change water into the sap of life;
Who taughtest the folk to tread out the ripe grapes,
And drain their lifeblood changèd into wine!
Lo, it shall be for the backbone of Osiris,
Set up for an everlasting memorial!
On his ribs hang the black clusters,
O giver of joy imperishable unto the people of the two lands."

And Thoth was fain to seek comfort for Isis,
A young black bull of death he brought her,
That stood by the river Hapi, the holy Nile.
And a seal of justice, foursquare,
A star of purity showed in his midforehead.
And on his tongue lo, the beetle
Of Kepper-Ra, the Creator of life,
And over his broad back hovered,
As the outline shadow of the sunward soaring eagle.
And Thoth said, "Let the soul of Osar
Be pleased to dwell henceforward
In the bull so marked with sacred marks.
Let the bull be Api, named for the river Hapi,
And Osar-hapi for thy husband's sake.
Let the bereaved folk worship in this figure
Thy belovèd, their lord and benefactor."

And Isis marvelled
And Nephthys greatly,
At the wondrous kindness shown them by Tehuti.

HONOUR TO THE DEAD OSAR

Wherefore Isis took a lotus from the river
And offered it unto Osiris
That he might even breathe its sweetness;
And lifting it then to heaven,
She cried aloud—"Lo, Ra,
Thou that wanest to old age,
And waxest again to youth,
I offer thee the pure lotus
That springeth up of itself
From the divine splendour hidden in the depths!
For the nostrils expressly of Ra,
He shot up out of the pool of purity,
He waxed, he budded, he bloomed:
It is the very head of my beloved.
Acceptable to thee be my thankful sacrifice!"

And Nephthys tarried, and fed a handful of tender grass
Unto the glorious jet black bull of the starred forehead.
And they placed upon the head thereof the kingly crown.
The sacred Uraeus atween his horns.
But Thoth, the Lord of Judgment, the scribe of Truth
Had pity upon them there,
And he spake once again fair words of comfort:—
"As I have ordained in the name of all the Gods
Such honours unto Osar,
So shall they be established
Forevermore in the two lands.
Howbeit, now it were expedient
That thou be very heedful.
Flee hence, O Ast, that thou mayest bear in safety the Avenger,
Unto a secret place where Suti may not find him.
For lo, the wicked and envious
Hath seized the throne of Osar,
And none shall thence remove the murderer.
Save he only, the young child, that shall be born of thee and
of the dead."

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

Then Isis waxed terrible and spake defiantly:—

“Hold not I in my keeping the Holy Name,
The Name of Ra, the most sacred,
The inmost, most potent forever
To create, and to destroy?”
And she did mightily endeavor to recall it,
But she remembered the Name no more,
The Name for the possession of which she strove,
Yea, to the uttermost with Ra,
Bringing him, the Supreme,
And with him, all his sons and daughters,
Nigh to death, that she, Isis, might bring him
Comfort and health in his hour of need,
And hold henceforth that secret,
That omnipotent Name as a pledge
Of safety and power forever.

And Isis made moan, recalling the word of Ra:

“Shouldest thou use it ever in wrath
It shall leave thee, a weak woman!”
And she fainted for dismay.
Then Tehuti who knew her thought
Had pity on the weakness of the bereaved,
And tenderly did he raise her up.
And wotting well the evil ahead
He caused virtue to pass into her,
And bestowed a marvellous strength upon her
To bear discomfiture and heavy hardship:—

“Go forth, O bereaved and mourning wife,
Leave thy dead in the faithful charge of strangers.
Nor shall this be the end of bitterness,
A sorrowing Mother shalt thou be,
Ere thy great triumph at the last.
But thy son, shall be even Heru, Horus!
The ancient foe of Evil shall become incarnate,

HONOUR TO THE DEAD OSAR

Flesh of thy flesh, bone of thy bone,
And his limbs shall be endued with twofold strength:
His father's thews and goodness—
And thy cunning and love of excellent glory.
He shall sit upon the throne of his father,
The Avenger, the exceeding Glorious,
And thou shalt rejoice in him!"

And Tehuti vanished out of their sight,
And the people wept aloud,
And worshipped reverently the dead God.

XI.

THE BIRTH OF HERU INCARNATE

XI.

And Isis left the holy sepulchre,
Choking with silent grief,
And Nephthys followed sobbing.
And they bade farewell once more to the dead:
"May the sacred Uraei defend thee,
And the sacred hovering hawk,
O my husband, O my brother."

"Why wouldest thou fare with me, O Sister,"
Spake Isis, unto Nephthys,
"Into the marshes, poor outcasts,
Where the fen-men be cruel
And the women uncomely?"
But Nephthys answered not,
And all the day long the sisters fared together
Seeking out some place of shelter
Among the fens, and found it not.

Then Mestet and Mestetef,
Two mighty scorpions,
Marched on the right hand and on the left;
And Petet and Thetet and Maatet
Took station as the fierce van;
And the mightiest Tefen and Befen
Brought up the terrible rear:—
The seven stars of the constellation, wherein Sothis shone
foremost,
Set them in battle array unbidden, to ward from violence
The blessed sisters Nebthet and Ast.

"I am weary," at length sighed Isis,
"And I long for a little rest.
Yea, the pains of motherhood
Will soon overtake and be upon me,
And prevail over my strength of heart.
Where may I bring forth mine only son in safety,

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

Whom the king shall seek that he may slay him,
His Avenger, the glorious one,
Whom the secret Name of Ra, invoked in wrath, hath granted me,
And Tehuti, lord of angels hath promised,
And Maat in righteousness and truth, hath decreed unerringly
Ere aught, that is, had being, yea, even from of old?"

And lo, the twain came unto the door of a proud dame
Wife of an overlord whom Isis had appointed
When she throned yet as sovran queen over the two lands.
"What, and shall an outcast woman
Lodge with me, even with me, in my great house?"
And they made known to her
How that it was the blessed lady Isis
Desolate in her hour of travail
That came to her, invoking succour.
"Nay, Ra forbid, lest I be a traitor so
Unto Suti, our lawful lord and king."
And the brazen doors of the great house
Clanger-to in the face of Isis.

And Isis spake to the seven scorpions:
"Lo, I am alone, and am in sorrow
More grievous than that of any woman.
Find me a way to the hidden place
Of Khebet, the floating island,
In the swamps where no man may pursue."
And on they went until a woman, very poor,
Opened the door of her wattled cot of reeds
And freely offered shelter unto Isis
Wotting not who she might be.
So Isis entered and took comfort,
And laid her weary limbs on a pallet of rushes.

Now ere long, at the door of the wattled hut
There knocked and prayed admission

THE BIRTH OF HERU INCARNATE

The proud dame, who had spurned her instant prayer:—

“Woe is me, O gracious Isis
I have sinned, I have sinned wickedly against thee,
That I asked thee not in when thou wast faint and weary
And anhungered, nigh thy time of anguish,
And thou didest deign to crave of me shelter and rest.
Behold what thy scorpions have done unto me!
Look on my little son, my only son,
Him they have stung, and he is lifeless,
And I live in grief and torment.
Restore him, O restore him!”

But the scorpions sang for joy:—

“Under the brazen eaves of the door
Stole Tefen and he slew him—
The child of the churlish woman!
In his little heart burneth the sevenfold poison
Of Petet and Thetet and Maatet,
Of Mestet and Mestetet,
Of Befen and Tefen.
Shall not the child of the wicked perish,
Of the proud and stiff-necked that denyeth shelter to the
wayfaring,
To the outcast woman in her piteous need?”

Nevertheless the great enchantress

Lifted herself up in gracious womanhood
And took pity on the little son,
Guiltless of the sin of his mother.
Yea, Isis yearned unto the boy,
And she recalled so to mind unwitting
The spells she had learned of Seb,
Of Seb her father—the God of the green earth
When he crooned to her at her cradleside of old.

And Isis took the dead child in her tender hands,
And laid him on her bosom in fond cherishing,

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

And the child opened forthwith his eyes
And laughed up in her face.
And she smiled and gave him gladly to the amazed and grate-
ful mother
That repented her in shame of her grievous sin.

Then Isis taketh heart of grace,
Rejoicing in her own deed of kindness:—
“Ah, not wholly forsaken am I,”
Cried Isis, the sorrowful,
“Not have I lost my cunning utterly!
Even as I have brought to life again
This little one, whom the terrible and mighty,
The seven wardens ordained of Ra,
Slew for his mother’s hardness of heart.
So shall I suffice, even I, yea, I thy mother,
Unto thy safety, my little one!

“Fear not, O glorious son of the betrayed and slain,
Thou foe of all evil even from the first beginning,
Fear not to be born my helpless infant.
In vain would the Evil King find thee.
Shall not the seven bystand thee,
The terrible seven?

“Ha, in thee is the seed whereof are all things!
Thou art the great Phœnix
That ariseth from his ashes forever!
Fear not to be born of Isis
The bereaved and desolate mother,
That summoneth thee, the Avenger,
The Restorer, her only son!”

And lo, when she had ceased from her chant
It came to pass straightway
That Heru, the great Heru, was born,

THE BIRTH OF HERU INCARNATE

Born of Isis, his blessèd mother,
Isis the haughty in her pride
Athirst for knowledge and power,
The faithful in her love,
The terrible in her righteous wrath.
And Nephthys worshipped,
And the old woman of the fens did worship,
And the proud dame gave precious gifts,
And her little son, restored to life again,
Crowed, and clapped his hands for gladness
And greeted the great newborn God!

XII.

THE NIGHTMARE AND BAPTISM OF HERU

XII.

And Osiris sat again at his sumptuous festal board—

For there did Isis behold him—

And all good men were glad.

And Isis brought forth her treasurer

Who told him of all his wealth,

The droves of hornèd cattle and the she-asses—

The high mounds of good grain in his houses of sun-dried brick,

The vessels of craftily hewn stone and quaint beaten brass,

The ornaments of wrought silver and gold, very precious,

The orient spices, making the heart to faint for sweetness,

The great store in costly vestures

Of divers colors, with needle work subtile, delicate—

Whereon were graven and carven and woven

His gracious moon of serviceable years.

And it was so, even so, nor might it be

The thought only of her yearning heart.

Howbeit, lo, Suti arose at the feast,

And caused to be brought into the hall a carven chest,

One treasure that Isis knew not of,

Fairer than all things else in the whole earth.

All men admired the cunning craft thereof, most excellent,

Meet for a king only, inlaid with shining images

Of Seb as the enhaloed moon swimming into the sky of Nut:

And Isis, for all her pride and shame,

Felt her heart grow keen, that she coveted sorely.

Ay for whom might so noble workmanship

Fetch peace in the long sleep at the last?

Who else but the son of Seb should lie therein

With glorious kingly state, the chosen offspring,

Ay, the equal of the Gods?

And she rebuked her heart in silence.

“Unto whomsoever shall the chest

Be rightly proportioned, unto him falleth

The prize, the sorely coveted.”

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

And Suti glanced sidelong wittingly at Isis,
And Isis shrank for her hot shame.
"See ye then among the lords of Osiris
If none there be stately enough in stature
That he may claim it for his own."

Now the lords and their guests laughed aloud one at the other,
As they did lay them down in the chest,
Each in the order of his degree,
But they fell short everyone of the length thereof.
Then cried they all with one accord:—
"Let the King, the godlike Osiris,
Venture, even as all his mighty men,
For who but he hath inherited
The lofty stature of the Gods?
Unto whom else save unto him only
Of right belongeth this bed for the last sleep,
This chest of cunning craftmanship,
That publisheth abroad the holy loves of Seb and Nut?"
And Isis, laughed as she looked upon her lord,
The tall and goodly, the stalwart and gracious.
Ay, who but he should rightfully occupy the holy chest?

And Osar spake: "What his lords have dared
Shall the king fear to do, and be accounted worthy?
Nay, none is there of all my people
Who shall not be as the king unto the king;
Wherefore also shall the king refrain from pride.
Humbling himself unto the mirth of his lords."
Then Isis had fain let him
Therefrom, and withstood his lords.
A reasonless misgiving fell on her as a beast of prey,
A horrible foreboding of dire ill clutched her throat.
But albeit she strove, as she met the eye of Suti,
She was as one stricken dumb and could not cry.
Her tongue clave fast to the roof of her mouth.

THE NIGHTMARE AND BAPTISM OF HERU

Was there then no guile? Yet could there harm befall
In the midst so of his loyal host and loving?
Yet fain was she to hinder, but her hands
Were as those of a stranger unto herself
Whose speech she might not understand,
And she quaked exceedingly,
And held in bitter fear her peace.

When lo, an awful thing,
Suti, the abominable, the cunning,
Closed down the chest and made it fast on a sudden,
And he shouted fierce defiance.
Then sprang his men from behind ambush, the fair pillars of
the hall,
But the lords of Osiris were astonished,
Tonguetied and powerless even as she,
The enchantress the queen, the wife of Osar.
And the men of Suti poured the molten lead
Into the seams of the chest with sneers and jeers,
And ere the lords might yet shake off the bonds of the wicked
spell,
And arouse them in wrath and loyalty, Suti shouted:—
“Into the Nile with him! On the river Hapi forth
Shall the good king float
To seaward in his funeral boat,
Ay, even to the great sea of the far North.”

And Isis strove in anguish to utter a great shout also
Unto the loyal lords of her doomed king,
But her voice had died deep in her throat,
And she trembled with the horror, as a rush in the night airs,
And became even as a bodiless ghost,
And she made haste and ran unto the marge of the river Hapi,
And followed the holy chest
On and on, on and on, ever on and on,
Until the gathering darkness shut it from her view,

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

Nor was there boat upon the river,
That she might follow, with speed;
And no man heeded her wrung hands and mute appeals,
Only the wild ducks flew swiftly north with him
As if to guard the imprisoned king.

Ha, was it then but a foul dream? A nightmare obsession?
And she wrestled in spirit and flesh
To cast off the bondage of appearances,
Yet were they mighty as the truth
And constrained her; and she knew not how
The horror of truth might alter,
Were she unwilling to suffer her lot.
Perchance a worse might be
For the craven that dared not dree it to the end,
The rebellious that set her athwart the course of the still
white stars.

Then seeming to arouse her and shake off a trance
As of ages lapsed in woe,
The queen was found.—
Awake, or in bodiless vision who might say?—
At Byblos, a haughty seacoast city of Syria.
And her wise heart warned her, beating high,
That her long lost lord was very near.
Then came she before the servants unto the queen of the land,
And breathed upon them, as the lotus when it openeth,
And plaited their hair in lovely wise.
And little wotted they how that she was the great Ast,
Queen Isis of the two broad lands.

Now when the maids did wait diligently upon their mistress,
The queen of Byblos made inquiry:—
“Whence the perfume of your locks my maidens?”
But they shrank not from the telling of their tale,
How that a strange woman had stayed from her journey,
And seated herself by the wayside.

THE NIGHTMARE AND BAPTISM OF HERU

And of the wondrous fragrance of her person
That passed into them she tended with her hand.
Wherefore the Queen of Byblos caused her to be summoned,
And she spake with her, and was exceeding glad:—
“A fair woman, whose hands are skillful,
To make my handmaidens fair as queens,
Whose breath but lightly breathed upon them
Causeth them to wax fragrant as the dawn?
Nay, make thine abode with me, good stranger.
Tend thou my son with thy most gracious hands,
Be thou his foster mother.” And Isis gave consent.

Whereupon it came to pass in the cold night
That the mighty Isis took the babe, her fosterling,
And bathed him in the flames,
On the blazing hearth of the great hall:
And she fluttered about in circles,
As a swallow twittering mournfully
Among the pillars of the roof,
Until the queen, awaking, did hear the twitter song,
And the crackle and leap of the quick tongues of fire,
And cried for terror, seeing what thing had befallen,
And recking little the sacred meaning thereof.

Then was Isis once more the goddess,
Revealed in all her beauty and power,
That the queen fell down and clung to her feet, adoring;
But the goddess gave back the babe into his mother's hands,
Nigh immortal for the bath of flame.
And Isis made request for her hero,
Even for the pillar of the house, nor dared the Queen deny her.
So the mighty pillar was removed thence
With reverent care, to sacred chaunts.
And lo, embedded in the sealed core thereof,
Stood the burial chest that carried Osar
Down the holy river to the sea!

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

“Ha, thou hast been verily the holy rood, my Lord,
The stay likewise of the far stranger’s roof.
The hollow erica tree hath folded thee
In its pungent scented bark as a winding sheet.
Thou hast concealed his sacred body
From harm and sacrilege.
Back shall I take thee in a wide-winged ship,
From Byblos to the holy Nile.”

And when she had spoken, she shrieked, the Goddess Isis,
For there before her stood Suti, the destroyer!
And behold it was but an evil dream.

Well was it that she had suffered the feigned doom,
For so she had sounded the depth under depth of Suti’s malice,
And meted the height over height of her Lord’s goodness,
Condescending even unto the unholy stranger,
And the length and breadth of her love
That never ceased to follow to the end,
That fetched him home at the last,
And the strength of her widowed heart that drew unto itself
 comfort—
Ay, a wellspring in the wilderness,—
Nursing and hallowing the child of another.
A stranger and queen, but a woman and mother!
Ah, which was true, life’s harrowing mystery,
Or the harrowing mazes of the cruel dream?

And Isis blessed Ra for her lonely motherhood,
And to her breast she folded her own babe,
The pre-existent Saviour incarnate,
Heru, the foe of evil, victorious in the beginning.
And his little hands lay dimpled,
Upon the heaving breast of the mother.
Then straightway, awaiting not the daylight,
Daring no longer delay the hallowed rite,

THE NIGHTMARE AND BAPTISM OF HERU

She set before him a silver basin
Full of water from the ever-running river:
And lo, in crystal stillness mirrored lay the moon,
The glorious moon in whose fashion her father
Sailed up with silver sail of cloud
Upon the great Nile of the heaven,
Unto the very bosom of the starry Nut,
Who withdrew her in soft shimmering veils of grey.

And Isis bathed herein her crowing babe,
And she lifted him, sparkling with the wet dew:
"O Seb, O Seb, my father, God of the earth,
Fruitful loam for the sprouting green!
Bless the Avenger, born of thee,
The mighty Saviour, with undying power and will to strive.
O Mother Nut, pure Goddess, Mother of the night sky, vested in
cool glory,
Endue him with the calm and everliving quiet,
With the dancing joy of thine imperishable stars."

And she knew in her heart that they heard her;
For the river flowed by them with low rustling whisper,
And the rushes and papyrus reeds did shiver in the gentle air,
And the light of the full moon bathed all in mystery and glister,
And she took her Lord unto her breast
And nestled him, and she was glad.

XIII.

THE STINGING OF THE BABE HERU

XIII.

Now a rumor went forth that Isis
Was hidden in the far papyrus swamps.
But Suti made diligent inquiry
Concerning the young child.
And well he wotted he might not slay him
If Isis came not forth from her place of hiding.
So he betook him unto the sacred tomb of Osar,
And he wrought there sacrilege and ruin:
The sacred body of his brother
With his own sword he clave in pieces
And set them floating on the river
In twice seven arks of woven bulrushes.
And the tale of the woeful, the hideous deed of sin
Came even unto the ears of the fen men,
And they bare tidings thereof unto Nephthys,
And she told it to Isis in fear and trembling.
And like it was, yet unlike—
More awful than her harrowing dream.

And the happy mother was once more the bereaved wife
And forth she went in quest of the sacred body.
The babe she entrusted unto Nebthet, the faithful,
And unto the blessed Mut, the mother Goddess,
Who in every goddess is herself the very mother.
She it was in love took the babe unto her bosom.
In the stead of Isis, and she spake:—
“Go forth, my daughter, fear thou not.
For I will be as thyself while thou doest thy pious office
Unto thine husband, my son, whose sacred body
Hath been outraged of the evil one, woe’s me, who also is
my son!”

Wherefore a shallop made Isis of papyrus,
A frail raft of the rushes
Bound together with snake-stemmed water-lillies.
And the crocodile durst not do her hurt

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

Though unarrayed perforce she sat in her boat
Shining in pure nakedness,
Her linen garment spread out for a sail
To catch the faint breath of the dawn.

But Suti had sent abroad his keen-eyed spies,
And they brought back tidings of Isis.
They retraced the marge of the river,
And they followed her footsteps
From where the shallop pushed off from the strand,
And they told the King where the young child lay,
In the bosom of the Holy Mut,
Tended of Nebthet, the whilom wife of Suti
Who had cast off the traitor, her lord.

Then Suti drew nigh, in fashion
Like unto one of the scorpions, the guardians of the child;
And he stole softly unto the babe,
And he smote him with his sting
Innocent, at play in the very lap of Nebthet.
But when the scorpions heard the cry of Heru,
Then altered Suti straightway his form
Into a crocodile's that wept for sorrow.
Nebthet and Mut uttered piercing cries,
And the fen-men assembled themselves together.

And lo, Isis, returning in her shallop,
Wotted not of her fresh sorrow.
All stood dumb before her
And spake unto her in awe of her bereavement:
"Heru, thy little one, sleepeth!"
"It is well," made answer Isis,
"For so his father sleepeth
In a secret hiding place of the blessed dead,
And Anpu, Anubis, keepeth his tender watch over him.
Every part of the sacred body have I recovered.

THE STINGING OF THE BABE HERU

Give me, give me, my child then to my bosom.
He shall not be ashamed of his mother
That adventured forth for his great father's sake."

"Shall we break his sweet slumber?"
Pleaded Nephthys, in sore pity,
"A sore illness hath befallen the child, O Sister,
And his sleep is very precious!
Wake him not up too suddenly."

But Isis peered into the cradle,
And she uttered forth a terrible cry,
And all the dwellers of the swamps
From far and nigh they gathered them together,
And they wept for the fearfulness of her misery.
Then came Nephthys shedding tears, and went about the swamps,
Uttering cries of grief.
And Serquet, the goddess of scorpions came,
"What is it, woman? What hath befallen Heru?"
"A scorpion, alas, hath stung him!"
"Nay no scorpion is it in truth.
Suti hath taken the guise of my servants falsely.
Wherefore no power have I to aid thee.
Call thou upon Ra, O Isis."

"Thou beautiful one of gold,
The boy, the child is helpless, still,
And no word of power is mine to speak.
Woe's me thy Holy Name, O Ra,
I uttered it in anger
Righteous yet fierce with hatred,
Wherefore am I bereft of thy power.
Quicken, notwithstanding, O Ra,
Quicken thou my child.
For the scorpion of Suti,
The slayer of the heart,

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

He hath found where he lay,
Heru, thy very heir!
O Ra, thy son of promise
Wouldest thou have him to perish utterly?
Quicken him the rather with thine undying life!"

And Ra, the magnanimous king,
Forgave in his heart the sorrowing mother,
For that as queen she would have mastered him
With unseemly and irreverent guile.
Not may he allow his Name,
His sacred Name, stolen from his bosom
To fail of kindly power
In the hour of sore distress.
Albeit she that called upon him
Knew it no more, to summon therewith
The all-power of his godhead.
In the flaming boat of his million years
He bade the rowers to cease at the golden oars,
And the golden disk stood still in the middle heaven,
And Tehuti, Lord of justice, sent he down to earth,
With Maat, the lady of immortal truth.

"From heaven are we come."
Spake they unto the bereaved,
"That we might save the child,
For his mother—that crieth on Ra,
And for the good king Osar,
That he might have a son, his only son.
To sit upon his throne forever in his stead.
Wherefore are we come this day
From the boat of the million years.
That beareth the glory of Ra.
Lo, from the place where it stood yesterday
It hath not moved!
It sitteth fast in the heart of the sky!"

THE STINGING OF THE BABE HERU

“Look up, I have come for the healing of Heru,
The righteous Avenger of his Father,
And he shall wax mighty
For he who hath died
May die no more,
Invulnerable is he as the babe had been
Of the queen of Byblos—
Hadest thou finished the burning
Of his mortal sin on that lonely night,
In the midst of the dream that I sent thee in sleep,—
The dream that is the truth of thy life—
That is the life thou ledest, and wottest not of,
That mingleth its good and evil with thy life
As it chanceth in the flesh.

“And truly not hadst thou suffered
This anguish of great fear,
Hadest thou mercifully let the wrath of thy scorpion
So he had wrought no evil
When he would slay the son of the hard-hearted,
The churlish mother that shut her gates against thee.
Yet for that thou tookest pity in the end
On the child, guiltless of his mother’s wickedness,
Shall pity now be shown of the holy God unto thy child,
Unto the child of Isis, the haughty one,
The Queen of the mighty words,
Who by guile possessed herself of the most secret Name of Ra!”

And Isis fell upon her face and worshipped.
And she blessed Ra in the highest heaven,
Humbled and hallowed of her sorrow;
And she blessed Ra in the highest heaven,
“Pity have I learned, O Ra,
O Golden Ra,
To love mine enemy with all my heart,
And hate and loathe alone his cursèd deed of evil.

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

Blessèd Ra,
Holy Father,
Henceforth is my son consecrate unto thee.
Again hast thou given him to live.
Begotten of Thee
He is thy child without a mother born,
Thine only, dedicate unto thy will,
Blessed Ra,
Holy Father of thine only Son."

XIV.

THE TESTING OF THE BOY HERU AND THE
VISION OF SUTI

XIV.

But Heru grew in comeliness and favor,
And waxed mighty of stature and of limb,
And the fen-men loved him dearly
And they spake unto no man of the lad,
That Suti, the evil king, knew not of his foe
And boasted himself, in his cups, secure
Seated for all time on the throne of the two lands.

Now the young Heru lay under a persea tree
To rest of his wily hunting
Among the papyrus marshes,
Where he had seized the swift fowl as it alit
By the clinging feet with his naked hand!
And the boy gazed into the dome of lapis lazuli
Through the shivering glinting silver of the reeds.
And he forgot the chase, and marvelled greatly
Remembering and pondering wistfully
Those things his mother Isis had done unto him.

For lo! had she not brought her kindled censer
And burned incense before him, her son,
Ere he started to go forth through the land
In his white sandals at the dawn?
And he had asked her in wonder
What this so strange a thing might mean.
But she made answer, and he wist not what she meant:—
“It is a prayer, and a holy omen, my son,
That thou mayest behold thy Father face to face,
And, discoursing with him, know thyself,
And what thou art, and what thou yet shalt do!”

So as he pondered full of awe
Under the persea tree, and cried,
Out of the throbbing heart of his dream
Unrecking what he did, in wistfulness:—
“Where art thou, O my Father,

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

That I might behold thy face of awe,
Out of the sweet fumes
O my mother's wreathing incense?"

Behold the shining shadow of Osiris
Drew nigh and stood at his very feet
And solemnly spake, "O Horus,
O my son, my first born, my only begotten,
What dost thou desire of me
More than ought else in heaven and earth?
According to thy will even so shall it be done unto thee!"

And the boy straightway beheld a vision,
The fashion of his heart's desire,
And it was his very self, none other,
That hovered wingless yonder aloft,—
For whom shall else the soul behold
Save his own purity and secret glory?—
In his right, the flail and the shepherd's crook
Of his sire, the king who blessed the outcast folk,
Making glad the spirits of the lowly:
And over his ear hung the lock of youth
Curling comely,
Upon his head the great crown
Red and white of the two lands,
And the Uraeus upswaying o'er his forehead.

Now the youth of his vision,
That had his favor with tenfold grace.
Hovered upborne on the mounting fragrance
Of the giant lotus, shining
With the arrowy beams of Ra at noon.
Then cried the boy, enraptured with his vision:—
"Now I know, O my Father,
What thing in chief would have of thee!"
"Speak my son, and be it unto thee

TESTING OF THE BOY HERU AND THE VISION OF SUTI

According to thy word." And the proud boy
Trembling for gladness, unfaltering made his prayer :—
"O my Father,
Give thou me to become a golden hawk,
A raging lion of the wilderness!
Make thou me altogether worthy in flesh and spirit!
Grant me a long spear
With a sharp point as a star
That turneth not aside,
But pierceth through the flinty rock!
Grant unto me great linkèd chains, forged of adamant,
Wherewith I may tether in shame
The Wicked, captive, to thy sacred tomb."

And the vision of his very self
That was revealed then unto him
Hovering above the lotus,
Changed into the mighty wingèd golden sun-disk,
And the godly form of his sire faded away in the twilight,
On whose lips there blossomed the smile of victory.
But in the hands of Heru was there found a spear
And a clanking chain also of many links.

And Horus sprang to his feet and ran unto Isis his mother.
Brandishing his new got weapon in air, he cried aloud :
"O my mother Ast, O my proud mother,
I have beheld him, I have indeed beheld Him!
My divine Father Osar have I seen, eye to eye!
I have stabbed already Suti, the craven heart of Suti."
And Isis cried, "Therefore, it is my son
I burned the incense before thee,
For that I beheld in thee One who should do valiantly
Making answer for his father, as a mighty God."

XV.

HERU SON OF OSAR VANQUISHETH SUTI

XV.

The battle of Suti, the traitor,
And of Heru, the avenger, raged horribly,
And all the two lands trembled
Nor durst there any man draw nigh—none in heaven or earth—
Save only Isis of the haughty womanhead,
The mother of the mighty.

Lo, in the end, Suti smote Heru with a flying rock
Torn loose from the desert mountains of Arabia.
But the son of Osar raged the more terrible
For the loss of his right eye,
Till Suti was minded to change his outer fashion
Into the clawing bear of the northern heaven.
Then Heru forebore not to meet guile with guile,
And his semblance became straightway as a ramping lion's,
More glorious and mighty in the southern night.

And Heru cried: "I shall not spare thy life
Save thou alter thy seeming to the loathly,
The ill-shapen monster of the marshes."
But Heru leaped fast in his own manhood on the slimy back
of Suti,
The lumbering beast of darkness,
And he chained him limb by limb,
And he gored him with his star-pointed spear,
And goaded him to a frothy speed of madness
That shook the earth in a crazed anguish of fear.
Wherefore, his mother Isis cried aloud:—
"Enough, my son, O my son,
Have pity to spare the mastered foe,
For is not he, after the flesh, of thy kindred,
Brother of Ast, thy mother,
Husband of Nebthet, thy fosterer,
Father of Anpu, thy father's faithful watcher?
Withhold then thy cruel arm, for lo, it is enough!"

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

But Heru was wroth, and waxed the more awful,
And his wrath turned hot against his mother,
That she fled before him as before a panther of the South.
And he reached out, and snatched from her head the crown:—
“No Goddess in sooth be thou, henceforward,
A weak woman, sore hurt of thy shameful pity,
That biddest thy son withhold his valor,
And stay the righteous smiting of the blow
For the utter ruin of the wicked.
No faithful wife art thou of the slain Osar.
Not mother more of his righteous avenger and son,—
But sister unto the traitor, unto the chained fiend!”
And as before a panther of the South,
Fled she from Heru for her very life.

But Tehuti, the king of angels,
Descended from on high,
From the boat of the thousand, thousand years,
From the everliving seat of the glory of Ra,
And he touched Heru,
And healed the eye of the champion:
And he staunched the gory wounds of Suti,
Ay, healed the mortal hurt of the Evil One:
“Her prayer hath yet prevailed:
Thus far, no further shall extend
The wrath of the avenger.”

Then Heru bowed unto the heavenly decree,
And was reconciled unto his mother,
Faring unto the holy sepulchre
To render unto his father all the glory.
And Isis his mother followed meek,
Yet proud her son had dared to humble her
In the awful spirit of his wrath.

HERU SON OF OSAR VANQUISHETH SUTI

Now whithersoever they fared
Throughout the two lands,
The loyal folk lit every one his candle
In honour of all the brave departed.
But Heru caused to perish utterly
All the treacherous followers of Suti.
Yea, a great battle waged he day by day
Without wrath or clamor,
And all along the way they wended,
That he might have wherewith to offer up a living sacrifice
Worthy of his father so foully done to death:—
“Ye shall be cut in pieces
All ye sworn foes of the true king, my sire.
Ye shall be riven, and whoso cleaveth to you shall be bereaved.
Every man of you shall be hacked asunder,
Yea, and ye shall rend and consume one another secretly,
That evil perish at the hands of evil!”

And it was so, even as Heru spake:
For in the bosom of the evil
Behold, Evil awoke to wage a war
Of craven wrath and venomous bitterness;
For, hath not Heru, the mighty, spoken the word of power
In the day of his exalted victory:
“That evil perish at the secret hands of evil?”

And lo, the stately dancers danced before the glorious One,
They shook and clanged the glittering systra—
The four elements of all things,—
Fire and earth, and air and water
For the shrill ringing bars thereof,—
That all the universe be purified with joy,
To drive forth therewith pitiless the Evil One
From the uttermost four corners thereof,
The Evil One whom Ast in her tenderness of heart
Womanlike bade Heru spare,

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

When he triumphed over him with the spear of his Right Hand!
Wherefore the dogs and the lions,
The wild cats and the panthers
Drave he forth, and the hippopotamus from the river,
The crocodiles likewise from the quagmires and marshes!

Howbeit the hawks and the vultures
Came to the aid of the holy world-cleanser;
They circled and swirled through the dazzling upper air,
Till they had purified the vault of heaven,
As their lord had thoroughly purged the whole habitable earth!
Whereupon the two lands rang with the glory of Heru,
The praises of the only son of Osar and Ast.

XVI.

THE RESURRECTION OF OSAR

XVI.

And Heru, the Avenger, greeted Anpu, the faithful keeper
At the Holy Sepulchre of Osar,
And sang unto the spirit of his father
A psalm of victory and worship:—

“I have brought unto thee, O my father,
The many-runged ladder of Suti, which the wicked one
Did hide from thee in the thick darkness of his soul,
Wherewith thy soul may climb now on high unto the Gods
From the dismal twilight of the nether world.

“Thou art the hidden soul,
Thou art the lord of souls,
The lord of eternity, the lord of beauty,
The mighty One of hallowed strength!
Thou art the inmost substance of the two lands!
Thou art he that doeth what is done,
That worketh kindness unto all mankind!
The good spirit of all spirits!

“Thou drawest thy waters from the abyss of heaven,
Thou summonest hither the north wind at eventide,
Cool air and fragrant for thy nostrils to breathe:
Thy heart doth quicken of itself and swell and bud
And groweth bountifully all food divine;
The dizzy height of heaven
And the starry-twinkling Gods yield thee homage,
Yea, the constellations, they which never set,
Await the frown of thy countenance;
The starry Gods of the underworld
Bow down themselves in supplication before thee,
Most beautiful Lord of the company of the Gods!

“O Thou, who art beloved of all that behold thy face
Hearken how all on the earth do cry out unto thee
With cries of yearning and welcome,
To summon thee, even thee, their joy!

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

O stablisher of truth, of Maat the chaste,
O mainstay of righteousness, of Tehuti, the wise,
O delight of thy great Father Seb, the fertile earth,
O beloved of the sky, thy Mother Nut.
Didst thou not die verily of thine excellent goodness?
Hast thou not begotten thy son, who hath wrought so great
 deeds in thy name,
Thy son, thy only son, to live unto thee and reign in thy holy
 stead?
Lo, I am Heru, thy only son, thy very son,
Behold, and approve that which I have done, O my Father!

“On this most beautiful day
Of thy fair rising in the soul of all,
Thy mounting to a broader noon of all-embracing love,
Thy love is doubly sweet unto all men,
For behold thy son hath avenged thee in will and in deed.
Holy and beneficent is thy Name henceforward,
And the awe of thee abideth, established forever over all!

“In the river flood, in the celestial water,
In the staff of life,
And in every flower of the field,
O my Father accept thou at the hand of thy son
The light of mine eye
Extinct for thy dear sake, and healed of Ra.
O thou that seest all things
In the worlds that are shut unto men’s eyes,
Be utterly satisfied with thy Son,
In thine innermost heart of love and justice, O my Father!”

And Isis and Nephthys who bowed low
At the singing of Heru’s hymn of oblation,
They took up the burden of his singing:—
“Forgive, O gracious God,
Whatso is done amiss—
Ay, that he spared thy foe

THE RESURRECTION OF OSAR

At the foolish chiding, at the womanish pity,
Of her that loved thee, of thy most loyal spouse.
Let not the sin be now reckoned against thy son,
That the Avenger spared our bitter brother's life,
When he had chastised the wicked Evil of his soul."

Then Isis arose, and held before the closed eyes of the God
The cross surmounted with the sun of righteousness,
And she lifted up her voice with passionate might:—
"Arise, and behold, if thou be verily a God,
Behold thy Son, as with the eyes of Man, O Osiris,
My husband, my king and God!"

And she waved over her dead Lord her mighty wings;
And behold,
At the wind of her mighty wings,
Befell a miracle of heavenly grace:
The sacred body of Osiris—
That had known not corruption,
That had healed to perfect wholeness,—
Though riven of the cruel sacrilegious Suti,
Numbering the days of the waning moon,
Setting Godhead, against Godhead,—
Ay, the sacred body of the dead king,
It trembled as with a shiver of sudden cold!
And behold he lifted up slowly his right hand of power,
And his eyelids of wonder lifted them,
And his lips of gentle speech did part them:—
"O glorious, O well-belovèd son."

And the dead God arose upon his bier,
And Anpu speedily loosened the linen swathings;
And the lion-bier of stone
That stood steadfast so long time as no living thing
Did roar alive again for gladness;
And the green falcon that had hung moveless in watchful awe
Shook vehemently his sunny wings,

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

And screamed as a great eagle in the zenith,
And fled up the sheer heavens to Ra,
To hover once more above the quick golden glory of Ra.

And lo, the God that died. Osiris,
The living one, stood up in his own might,
And Isis, the widowed mother,
Worshipped her spouse and clung unto his knees,
And Nephthys, the loyal sister, the fosterer of his son, did
 worship,
And Horus, the pre-existent, avenger of the godly, worshipped
 also
The Goodness he had made to triumph forevermore.

And behold all about the sacred tomb
 Stood clumps of trees, down-laden
 With juicy fruit, of no man's planting;
 And grapes hung heavy on every tree-trunk,
 From vines of no man's rearing;
 And the wheat and the barley waved, of no man's sowing,
 In a sea of sunny gold throughout the land of Isis,
 Full now of crimson and azure flowers
 As the night sky of myriad eyes;
 And the morning star danced in splendour of white fire,
 And shouted, to Sah, Orion;
 And Ra cast his dazzling glory upon them all.
For the people came in thousands and thousands of thousands.
And the highlands rang with gladness
When they beheld together
The marvellous beauty and splendor of their good king,
Risen mightily from the blessed dead.

But Horus holding him, new-arisen, by the hand,
Isis and Nephthys, following in meekness,
And Anubis, warder of the rear,
They wended their happy way in stately silence,

THE RESURRECTION OF OSAR

To the shining palace of the king,
To the temple of the God who dieth no more henceforth forever.

And the multitudes brake into shouting ;

As the waves of the roaring sea :—

“Hail Osiris, Hail Osiris, that was dead
Who reigneth again in everlasting splendour !
Hail Osiris, Hail Osiris, the living, the loving Lord,
In whom his people shall rejoice
With great and holy gladness
From generation to generation,
Even forever and forevermore.”

XVII.

THE JUDGEMENT OF SUTI AND THE
VINDICATION OF OSAR

XVII.

And hark, as Osiris mounted
The steps unto his exalted throne,
Treading staid and stately between obelisks
Whereover by Isis had been recorded
The great deeds of the past reign of her lord,
Whereon had labored the cunning artificers,
There cried out a terrible voice
Into the astonished midst of the lords,
And the great ones of the king's company:—

“He shall not occupy again the holy throne
He, who is unclean,
He shall not remove the rightful heir
The son of his mother!
Horus who hath fought with me,
And saith he worsted me, is not the heir.
Because he hated me was he adopted,
For the true Horus was slain in the marshes
Of a venomous scorpion when a child;
And Osiris, I slew for that he wrongèd me,
When my wife forsook me and gave unto him in my stead,
Wherefore Anpu, Anubis, the son of Nephthys
Is son of Osiris, and none of mine.”

Now the people would have slain Suti,
And Horus lifted his terrible spear like a bolt of lightning,
But King Osiris, the meek, spake with great mildness—
The mildness even as of one new-arisen from the dead:—

“Justice shall here be unto all men,
Rendered evenhandedly and freely
And most with mercy unto them that lack it most,
The poor and the homeless and the outcast,
In the dominion of the godlike king.”

“Too great, O my father, is thy loving kindness
And the patience of thy noble spirit.

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

Shall the wicked one," cried Horus,
"Whom my mother Isis spared in her woman's pity,
Bring foul accusations against our lord the king,
And hurl insults at thy champion,
His vanquisher in equal battle?
And who shall there be to judge between us?"

"I make mine appeal unto Ra,
Unto Tehuti, his recorder and his angels,
Unto Maat, the truth that shineth in his presence!"
Cried the evil one.
Spake then the most mighty in goodness,
"The Gods must heed, and hold assizes
Even at the cry of Suti, the accuser;
For the throne of the high Gods is founded
In truth alone and righteousness."

"Lo, ye gods it is I that slew Osiris,"
Cried the terrible Accuser
Lifting his hand to heaven,
"Yet I slew him for mine honour,
Lest, a gross sinner, he wear the two crowns,
And unhallow by his sway the sacred two lands,
A man that betrayed his mother's son!
Moreover, if in sooth this be Horus,
Be verily the Horus that perished,
Yet might he not be true child of Osiris,
And Isis did sin against her husband."

Such then was the accusation of the Accuser,
But Osiris offered himself meekly
For the sake of truth and righteousness
Unto the inquiry of the holy judges,
The two score and two exalted Gods
Elect each one for his nome of the twain kingdoms,
That one may bear witness to whatso is done in his nome,
Who wotteth the mind and the heart of the inhabitants thereof.

JUDGEMENT OF SUTI AND THE VINDICATION OF OSAR

These sat aloft in their majesty,
Two score and two, austere, incorruptible.

And the devourer of the unjustified,
A monster unspeakable stood by,
Whose jaws do drip and are like unto the crocodile's,
Reached with hooked teeth to the middle heaven,—
And his shoulders and forelegs,
A spotted hyena's upon the earth,—
And his hindquarters, as an hippopotamus
Breaking through of their proper weight into the hells,—
He, the tusked devourer of the rejected,
Yawned expectant of doom
For the destruction of the accused.

Then was the sacred heart of Osiris
Set by itself in one basin of the scales,
And the holy feather of truth lay in the other.
And the fearful, unbribable Anpu
Watched the trembling tongue of the balance,
Forgetting love in his holy office.
And the merciless keen Tehuti, the recorder,
Displayed the books of everlasting judgement.

And lo, Ra, the Supreme God of Gods,
Called upon the judges, the austere and incorruptible, august,
That they straightway render sentence:—
Whereupon the two score and twain
Spake as one man: "Behold we find no fault in him.
Osiris is guiltless before us and without spot or blemish.
Suti hath deceived his own false heart,
For that he is drunken with envy and malice.
The disloyal one hath spoken iniquity.
When he speaketh a lie, behold it is his own, the word he hath
spoken;
When he doeth murder, he doeth it with his heart's delight."

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

And Ra, the Supreme, gave assent unto the judgement:—

“It is true what ye have spoken,

I find no fault in him at all.

Osar, the faithful, is worthy,

And all do cherish him both in earth and heaven.

Suti, the disloyal and the base,

All do hate him as in heaven so on the earth.

Nephthys, the fosterer doeth well

If she preferreth the good unto the evil.

Anpu, the son of Suti,

Released from the holy filial ties,

Justly may choose Osiris in the stead of his sire,

The adopted Son of *his* Spirit that is good,

Rather than son after the flesh of the wicked One.

And Heru is the very life of Osar

Made manifest in youthful splendour.

By my creative word was he begotten

Unto the innocent and childless dead,

That he might lack not his avenger.

He is the very son of Osar,

Spirit of his spirit, God of God,

And in him have I set forth my glory

That he bless mankind forever!

“But the judgement upon Suti, shall stand fast:

That Heru, and Osar have made known

What is in his heart, unto all men;

Hearken thy punishment, O Suti, mine evil son:—

Upon thy shoulders shalt thou bear

Him that is greater and mightier than thou,

For that he is fain ever to do good,

And his heart is true and holy.”

Then of a sudden was Suti changed in fashion

Like unto a red ass of the wilderness;

And he was tame and meek, and mightily

JUDGEMENT OF SUTI AND THE VINDICATION OF OSAR

Laughed all the heaven and the whole earth:
For Heru and Anpu layed upon Suti the king's robe—
And upon the robe they set him,
The mighty one and the meek,
Him that was risen again from the dead,
The best belovèd of all gods and men,
And they hailed the king, so riding forth to judgement:

"Thy members are bright and shining,
As new copper in the sunlight.
Thy head is precious as lapis lazuli,
Blue as the broad sky of noon.

"Behold him, O ye people, how he weareth
On both sides a mantle of green turquoise,
The springtime verdure on either bank of Nile.
Lo, it is he whom ye have desired to see,
And he rideth in triumph on the back of the wicked!
On the broad back of the wicked
That slew him unawares,
That rent his sacred body,
And lo, now, is he tame
And beareth in triumph the holy one he hated!

"O thou God of a million years,
Whose form and beauty of countenance
Doth pervade the awful underworld,
It is thou that towest the earth
By truth, Maat, in thy name Seker—
The boat that carrieth the blessed—
To the fields of a far-off sunset:
Thine shall be an everlasting kingdom!

"O ye mighty wicked, tremble
For henceforth is there judgement
To come suddenly even upon you!
And for that Osiris the immortal king
Submitted the cause of the wicked against him

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

To the judgement meekly of the righteous,
Therefore, also hath Ra granted unto Osar
The greater kingdom of souls departed,
And unto Heru, his only son,
Hath he given to sway the world of living men."

Forth rode Osiris therefore unto his new kingdom,
His steadfast rule established over the blessed dead
Where they rest them in still meadows,
Where they delight in the chase yet slay not,
Where they plow and sow and reap,
Ay, garner without weariness forever,
Where they rear and prune and train
The fruit tree and the clambering vine,
Where they number the stars in their courses,
Where they are filled full with the love one of another
And with the glory of their undying king.

Now Heru was left standing on the steps of the great throne
And Osar and Ast, and Anpu and Nebthet
Had passed on into the sunset in the west,
Wherefore Heru cried with a great cry:—
"Woe, unto the wicked man,
Woe, woe unto him,
For lo, in this world, where all things pass
Save truth and righteousness,
I shall straitly execute the commandments of my Father,
Seated on his everlasting throne;
And in the next world, where all things abide for aye,
My Father Osiris
Rearisen from the dead
In his flesh incorruptible,—
With the crook of the Great Shepherd
In his glorious right hand,
With the flail of the harvester
That thresheth the corn in his mightier left,—

JUDGEMENT OF SUTI AND THE VINDICATION OF OSAR

Under his quivering canopy of fire,
By the river of life,
Is enthroned forever, a terror unto the wicked,
And a blessed joy unto the holy.

“Lo, at his feet from the river of life
Shooteth and blossometh the lotus
Whose fragrance floateth before him
Toward sunrising, toward sunsetting,
To the North and to the South;
And in his rear standeth Isis, his beloved,
The proud and haughty in power,
The tender and gracious in sorrow,
And her kind sister, my mother of gentle shadow
That ministereth unto the faint and weary.”

But the people sang in thanksgiving:—
“Blessèd henceforth are the good,
The holy and the kind,
For Osiris will be their judge,
Even Osiris himself, the justified,
And he will take their part in the face of the adversary.
They shall taste the fruit of his righteousness,
They shall continue his own forever,
Ay forever and forever.”

=====

Here endeth the Gospel of the Poor,
Even the good news unto the desolate, the afflicted and the
bereaved;
Here endeth the Promise of Judgement upon the mighty wicked
In his over-weaning pride and subtile malice;
Here endeth the promise of Blessedness upon the humble true.

Lift up thine eyes therefore unto Heru and bow before him!
In the days of thine untoward change,

THE GOSPEL OF OSIRIS

Be thou Osar, call upon him,
Be called even by his holy Name;
And Heru will take thee by the hand and lead thee unto his
 Father,
Who will bid thee welcome, even thee, for his Name's sake,
In his everlasting kingdom of righteousness and peace.

Hail, O ye that enter into his rest,
 Into the rest of Osar,
 That dwell henceforth forever,
 Safe in his gladness and glory
 Where virtue and love make their abode
 World without end.

All Hail Osar, the well beloved,
 Hail Ast, the haughty and faithful,
 Hail Heru their Son,
 Their only Son,
 That holdeth sway among the living
 And leadeth the holy unto the holy One,
 First Prince of the West,
 The King his Father,
 Who welcometh them that Horus loveth,
 His holy ones and true.

AFTERWORD

In correspondence with Professor James H. Breasted, of the University of Chicago, concerning the vocalization of the chief names involved in this Epic Lyric Cento, it was decided to adopt "Heru" and "Aiset" for "Heru" and "Aist" as roughly correct (scientifically) and as meeting at the same time the needs of euphony. Unfortunately this final selection did not reach me by mail until the whole poem was already in page proof and could not well, without very considerable expense, take effect. This is unfortunate, but the reader can make the change for himself.

The word "hawk" is preserved instead of "falcon" on account of its use in Biblical English. The two words overlap as to connotation, the one being of Latin, the other of Saxon origin. Of course, the Egyptian hawk was a bird akin to that used in sport, and "falcon" would be more strictly correct, as avoiding the recent American use of hawk and its erroneous designation.

Perhaps the reader may be interested in the communication with which Dr. Breasted honored the compiler of this lyric-epic here inserted by permission:

"You have evidently caught a vision of the mythic stories of Egypt which is very picturesque and attractive, and which shows a knowledge of much of their detail. Undoubtedly the poem would acquaint the popular reader with the content of the surviving Egyptian myths in a form that is very pleasing, human and vivid.

"In such a presentation the subjective element is unavoidable, I suppose. Your representation of the sting from which Ra suffered, as doubt in the mind of the goddess, is a very fine touch, but of course it unhappily remains subjective and incapable of demonstration. I have noted on the margin a few archaeological matters, which, without being pedantic, it might be well to alter.

"I wish your poem a hearty bon voyage, and I thank you very much for the opportunity of reading it in advance."

Particularly valuable is what he has to say concerning the interpretation of the serpent and its sting in the heel of the God Ra.

AFTERWORD

Without some such assimilation, the old picturesque and authentic legend could not have well been drawn into moral and, therefore, truly poetic relation with the chief epic cycle of Osiris, that is ever religious and ethical in import and tone.

For the conception of the God as old, arising in some measure, at least, in an ageing of religious experience, there is at all events some inherent probability. Conviction becomes more and more impersonal, remote, and the divine Idea weakens and relaxes its grasp on belief and thereby forfeits healing and creative power for the will and the devotional spirit, when fresh experience is not had from time to time, at least vicariously or sympathetically through seers and religious leaders. The oldness and infirmity of the belief is dramatically transferred to the image of the God-head. In venturing this rather subtle piece of divination the writer might as well acknowledge his debt to William Blake, who deprecated the conception of God as an old man, insisting that, when the soul has had a vivid personal experience, God is seen rather as the eternal babe.

This afterword is dictated by a haunting scholarly scruple, an over-honest desire to put into the hands of the reader the best possible opportunity for criticising the compiler and editor of these ancient materials, indicating the one spot at which he has had to rely on interpretative religious imagination for the poetic use of an else barbarous and offensively irreverent legend.

The author ventures to add also here a brief bibliography of Frances Wright D'Arusmont, so as to facilitate access for the serious reader to the work of her whom to associate with the Lady Isis is a debt of gratitude gladly paid.

Frances Wright d'Arusmont, better known as "Fanny Wright," was born in Miln's Building, Nethergate, Dundee, Scotland, September 6, 1795, and died in Cincinnati, Ohio, December 2, 1852.

Her published works are:

1. "Altorf: A Tragedy." 1819.

(Presented with success in New York until the performances were stopped by the burning of the theatre.)

AFTERWORD

2. "Views of Society and Manners in America, Letters to a Friend in England by an English Woman." 1820.

(Published in several English and American editions. This is a treasury of quaint observation, and has permanent interest for the lover of American beginnings.)

3. "A Few Days in Athens: being the Translation of a Greek Manuscript Discovered in Herculaneum." 1822.

(Published in many editions, some pirated under the title of "The Garden of Epicurus." This is her best published imaginative work.)

4. "Course of Popular Lectures with Three Addresses." 1829.

(Published also in many subsequent editions, being a collection of her most famous platform deliverances.)

5. "Fables." 1842.

(Appeared first in (New Harmony) Popular Tracts No. 1, office of Free Enquirer, New York City, 1830.)

6. "England, the Civilizer, her History Developed in Its Principles." 1848.

(This is by many regarded as her most important contribution to political thought and contains the substance of her later lectures.)

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